

ST. PETER'S COURT.

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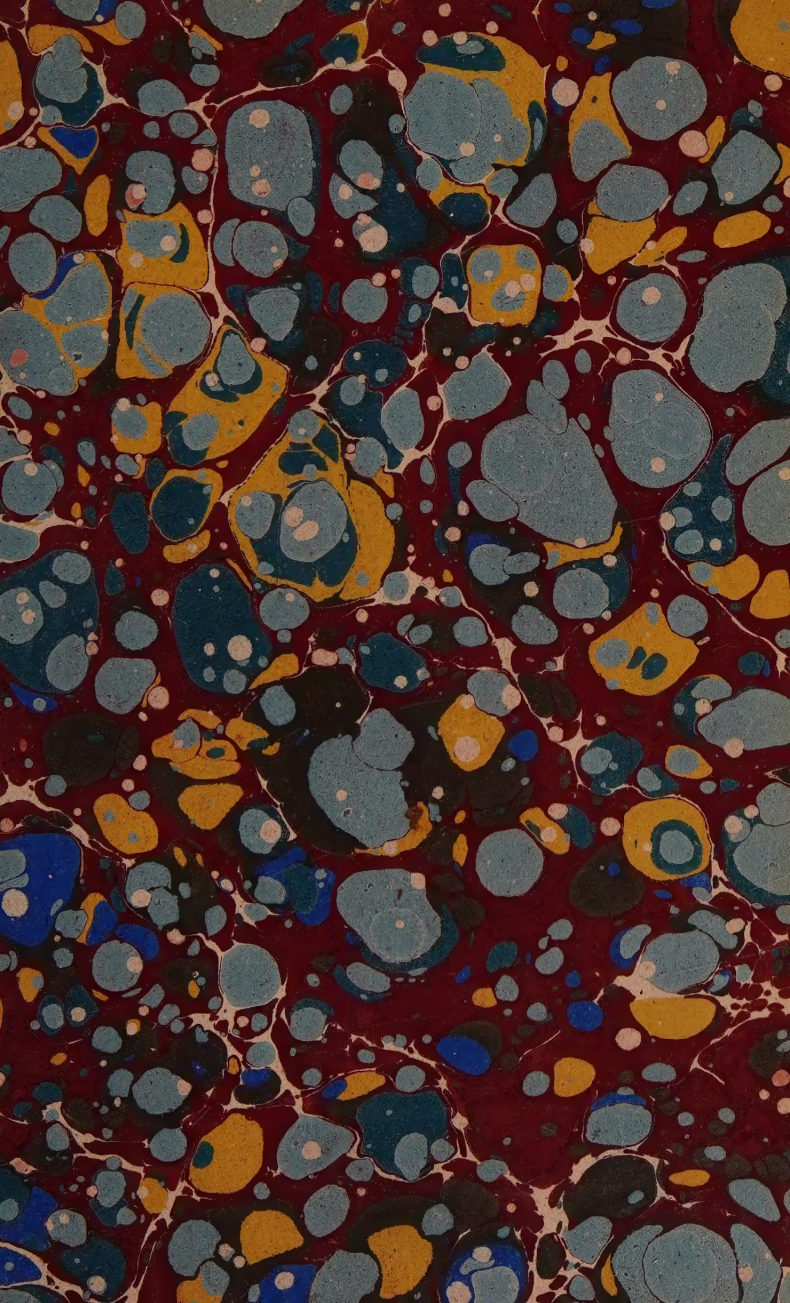
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POETICAL WORKS

OF

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON



POETICAL WORKS OF
ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON
POET LAUREATE

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TO THE QUEEN.

*Revered, beloved—O you that hold
A nobler office upon earth
Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,*

*Victoria,—since your Royal grace
To one of less desert allows
This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base ;*

*And should your greatness, and the care
That yokes with empire, yield you time
To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there ;*

*Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
And thro' wild March the throstle calls,
Where all about your palace-walls
The sun-lit almond-blossom shakes—*

*Take, Madam, this poor book of song ;
For tho' the faults were thick as dust
In vacant chambers, I could trust
Your kindness. May you rule us long,*

*And leave us rulers of your blood
As noble till the latest day !
May children of our children say,
'She wrought her people lasting good ;*

*' Her court was pure ; her life serene ;
God gave her peace ; her land reposed ;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen ;*

*' And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet*

*' By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people's will,
And compass'd by the inviolate sea.'*

March 1851.

JUVENILIA.

CLARIBEL.

A MELODY.

I.

WHERE Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall :
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II.

At eve the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket lone :
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone :
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throistle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling rannel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

NOTHING WILL DIE.

WHEN will the stream be aweary of
flowing
Under my eye ?
When will the wind be aweary of blowing
Over the sky ?

When will the clouds be aweary of
fleeing ?

When will the heart be aweary of
beating ?

And nature die ?

Never, oh ! never, nothing will die ;

The stream flows,

The wind blows,

The cloud fleets,

The heart beats,

Nothing will die.

Nothing will die ;

All things will change

Thro' eternity.

'Tis the world's winter ;

Autumn and summer

Are gone long ago ;

Earth is dry to the centre,

But spring, a new comer,

A spring rich and strange,

Shall make the winds blow

Round and round,

Thro' and thro',

Here and there,

Till the air

And the ground

Shall be fill'd with life anew.

The world was never made ;

It will change, but it will not fade

So let the wind range ;

For even and morn

Ever will be

Thro' eternity.

Nothing was born ;

Nothing will die ;

All things will change.

ALL THINGS WILL DIE.

Clearly the blue river chimes in its
flowing

Under my eye ;

Warmly and broadly the south winds are
blowing

Over the sky.

One after another the white clouds are
fleeing ;

Every heart this May morning in joyance
is beating

Full merrily ;

Yet all things must die.

The stream will cease to flow ;

The wind will cease to blow ;

The clouds will cease to fleet ;

The heart will cease to beat ;

For all things must die.

All things must die.

Spring will come never more.

Oh ! vanity !

Death waits at the door.

See ! our friends are all forsaking

The wine and the merrymaking.

We are call'd—we must go.

Laid low, very low,

In the dark we must lie.

The merry glees are still ;

The voice of the bird

Shall no more be heard,

Nor the wind on the hill.

Oh ! misery !

Hark ! death is calling

While I speak to ye,

The jaw is falling,

The red cheek paling,

The strong limbs failing ;

Ice with the warm blood mixing ;

The eyeballs fixing.

Nine times goes the passing bell :

Ye merry souls, farewell.

The old earth

Had a birth,

As all men know,

Long ago.

And the old earth must die.

So let the warm winds range,

And the blue wave beat the shore ;

For even and morn

Ye will never see

Thro' eternity.

All things were born.

Ye will come never more,

For all things must die.

LEONINE ELEGIACS.

Low-FLOWING breezes are roaming the
broad valley dimm'd in the gloaming :
Thoro' the black-stemm'd pines only
the far river shines.

Creeping thro' blossomy rushes and bowers
of rose-blowing bushes,

Down by the poplar tall rivulets babble
and fall.

Barketh the shepherd-dog cheerly ; the
grasshopper carolleteth clearly ;

Deeply the wood-dove coos ; shrilly the
owlet halloos ;

Winds creep ; dews fall chilly : in her
first sleep earth breathes stilly :

Over the pools in the burn water-gnats
murmur and mourn.

Sadly the far kine loweth : the glimmer-
ing water outfloweth :

Twin peaks shadow'd with pine slope to
the dark hyaline.

Low-throned Hesper is stayed between
the two peaks ; but the Naiad

Throbbing in mild unrest holds him
beneath in her breast.

The ancient poetess singeth, that Hes-
perus all things bringeth,

Smoothing the wearied mind : bring me
my love, Rosalind.

Thou comest morning or even ; she
cometh not morning or even.

False-eyed Hesper, unkind, where is my
sweet Rosalind ?

SUPPOSED CONFESSIONS

OF A SECOND-RATE SENSITIVE MIND.

O GOD ! my God ! have mercy now.
I faint, I fall. Mea say that Thou

Didst die for me, for such as *me*,
 Patient of ill, and death, and scorn,
 And that my sin was as a thorn
 Among the thorns that girt Thy brow,
 Wounding Thy soul.—That even now,
 In this extremest misery
 Of ignorance, I should require
 A sign ! and if a bolt of fire
 Would rive the slumbrous summer noon
 While I do pray to Thee alone,
 Think my belief would stronger grow !
 Is not my human pride brought low ?
 The boastings of my spirit still ?
 The joy I had in my freewill
 All cold, and dead, and corpse-like grown ?
 And what is left to me, but Thou,
 And faith in Thee ? Men pass me by ;
 Christians with happy countenances—
 And children all seem full of Thee !
 And women smile with saint-like glances
 Like Thine own mother's when she bow'd
 Above Thee, on that happy morn
 When angels spake to men aloud,
 And Thou and peace to earth were born.
 Goodwill to me as well as all—
 I one of them : my brothers they :
 Brothers in Christ—a world of peace
 And confidence, day after day ;
 And trust and hope till things should cease,
 And then one Heaven receive us all.

How sweet to have a common faith !
 To hold a common scorn of death !
 And at a burial to hear
 The creaking cords which wound and eat
 Into my human heart, whene'er
 Earth goes to earth, with grief, not fear,
 With hopeful grief, were passing sweet !

Thrice happy state again to be
 The trustful infant on the knee !
 Who lets his rosy fingers play
 About his mother's neck, and knows
 Nothing beyond his mother's eyes.
 They comfort him by night and day ;
 They light his little life alway ;
 He hath no thought of coming woes ;
 He hath no care of life or death ;
 Scarce outward signs of joy arise,
 Because the Spirit of happiness

And perfect rest so inward is ;
 And loveth so his innocent heart,
 Her temple and her place of birth,
 Where she would ever wish to dwell,
 Life of the fountain there, beneath
 Its salient springs, and far apart,
 Hating to wander out on earth,
 Or breathe into the hollow air,
 Whose chillness would make visible
 Her subtil, warm, and golden breath,
 Which mixing with the infant's blood,
 Fulfils him with beatitude.
 Oh ! sure it is a special care
 Of God, to fortify from doubt,
 To arm in proof, and guard about
 With triple-mailed trust, and clear
 Delight, the infant's dawning year.

Would that my gloomed fancy were
 As thine, my mother, when with brows
 Propt on thy knees, my hands upheld
 In thine, I listen'd to thy vows,
 For me outpour'd in holiest prayer—
 For me unworthy !—and beheld
 Thy mild deep eyes upraised, that knew
 The beauty and repose of faith,
 And the clear spirit shining thro'.
 Oh ! wherefore do we grow awry
 From roots which strike so deep ? why
 dare

Paths in the desert ? Could not I
 Bow myself down, where thou hast knelt,
 To the earth—until the ice would melt
 Here, and I feel as thou hast felt ?
 What Devil had the heart to scathe
 Flowers thou hadst rear'd—to brush the
 dew

From thine own lily, when thy grave
 Was deep, my mother, in the clay ?
 Myself ? Is it thus ? Myself ? Had I
 So little love for thee ? But why
 Prevail'd not thy pure prayers ? Why
 pray

To one who heeds not, who can save
 But will not ? Great in faith, and strong
 Against the grief of circumstance
 Wert thou, and yet unheard. What if
 Thou pleadest still, and seest me drive
 Thro' utter dark a full-sail'd skiff,
 Unpiloted i' the echoing dance

Of reboant whirlwinds, stooping low
 Unto the death, not sunk ! I know
 At matins and at evensong,
 That thou, if thou wert yet alive,
 In deep and daily prayers would'st strive
 To reconcile me with thy God.
 Albeit, my hope is gray, and cold
 At heart, thou wouldest murmur still—
 'Bring this lamb back into Thy fold,
 My Lord, if so it be Thy will.'
 Would'st tell me I must brook the rod
 And chastisement of human pride ;
 That pride, the sin of devils, stood
 Betwixt me and the light of God !
 That hitherto I had defied
 And had rejected God—that grace
 Would drop from his o'er-brimming love,
 As manna on my wilderness,
 If I would pray—that God would move
 And strike the hard, hard rock, and thence,
 Sweet in their utmost bitterness,
 Would issue tears of penitence
 Which would keep green hope's life.
 - Alas !

I think that pride hath now no place
 Nor sojourn in me. I am void,
 Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.

Why not believe then ? Why not yet
 Anchor thy frailty there, where man
 Hath moor'd and rested ? Ask the sea
 At midnight, when the crisp slope waves
 After a tempest, rib and fret
 The broad-imbased beach, why he
 Slumbers not like a mountain tarn ?
 Wherefore his ridges are not curls
 And ripples of an inland mere ?
 Wherefore he moaneth thus, nor can
 Draw down into his vexed pools
 All that blue heaven which hues and paves
 The other ? I am too forlorn,
 Too shaken : my own weakness fools
 My judgment, and my spirit whirls,
 Moved from beneath with doubt and fear.

'Yet,' said I, in my morn of youth,
 The unsunn'd freshness of my strength,
 When I went forth in quest of truth,
 'It is man's privilege to doubt,

If so be that from doubt at length,
 Truth may stand forth unmoved of change,
 An image with profulgent brows,
 And perfect limbs, as from the storm
 Of running fires and fluid range
 Of lawless airs, at last stood out
 This excellence and solid form
 Of constant beauty. For the Ox
 Feeds in the herb, and sleeps, or fills
 The horned valleys all about,
 And hollows of the fringed hills
 In summer heats, with placid lows
 Unfearing, till his own blood flows
 About his hoof. And in the flocks
 The lamb rejoiceth in the year,
 And raceth freely with his fere,
 And answers to his mother's calls
 From the flower'd furrow. In a time,
 Of which he wots not, run short pains
 Thro' his warm heart ; and then, from
 whence

He knows not, on his light there falls
 A shadow ; and his native slope,
 Where he was wont to leap and climb,
 Floats from his sick and filmed eyes,
 And something in the darkness draws
 His forehead earthward, and he dies.
 Shall man live thus, in joy and hope
 As a young lamb, who cannot dream,
 Living, but that he shall live on ?
 Shall we not look into the laws
 Of life and death, and things that seem,
 And things that be, and analyse
 Our double nature, and compare
 All creeds till we have found the one,
 If one there be ?' Ay me ! I fear
 All may not doubt, but everywhere
 Some must clasp Idols. Yet, my God,
 Whom call I Idol ? Let Thy dove
 Shadow me over, and my sins
 Be unremember'd, and Thy love
 Enlighten me. Oh teach me yet
 Somewhat before the heavy clod
 Weighs on me, and the busy fret
 Of that sharp-headed worm begins
 In the gross blackness underneath.

O weary life ! O weary death !
 O spirit and heart made desolate !
 O damned vacillating state !

THE KRAKEN.

BELOW the thunders of the upper deep ;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth : faintest sunlights
flee

About his shadowy sides : above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and
height ;

And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret
cell

Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering
green.

There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge seaworms in his
sleep,

Until the latter fire shall heat the deep ;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the sur-
face die.

SONG.

THE winds, as at their hour of birth,
Leaning upon the ridged sea,
Breathed low around the rolling earth
With mellow preludes, ' We are free.'

The streams through many a liliated row
Down-carolling to the crisped sea,
Low-tinkled with a bell-like flow
Atween the blossoms, ' We are free.'

LILIAN.

I.

AIRY, fairy Lilian,
Flitting, fairy Lilian,
When I ask her if she love me,
Claps her tiny hands above me,
Laughing all she can ;
She'll not tell me if she love me,
Cruel little Lilian.

II.

When my passion seeks
Pleasance in love-sighs,
She, looking thro' and thro' me
Thoroughly to undo me,
Smiling, never speaks :
So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
From beneath her gathered wimple
Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
Till the lightning laughs dimple
The baby-roses in her cheeks ;
Then away she flies.

III.

Prythee weep, May Lilian !
Gaiety without eclipse
Wearieth me, May Lilian :
Thro' my very heart it thrilleth
When from crimson-threaded lips
Silver-treble laughter trilleth :
Prythee weep, May Lilian.

IV.

Praying all I can,
If prayers will not hush thee,
Airy Lilian,
Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee,
Fairy Lilian.

ISABEL.

I.

EYES not down-dropt nor over-bright,
but fed
With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
Pure vestal thoughts in the trans-
lucent fane
Of her still spirit ; locks not wide-dispread,
Madonna-wise on either side her
head ;
Sweet lips whereon perpetually did
reign
The summer calm of golden charity,
Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,
Revered Isabel, the crown and head,
The stately flower of female fortitude,
Of perfect wifeness and pure lowli-
head.

II.

The intuitive decision of a bright
 And thorough-edged intellect to part
 Error from crime; a prudence to
 withhold;
 The laws of marriage character'd in
 gold
 Upon the blanch'd tablets of her heart;
 A love still burning upward, giving light
 To read those laws; an accent very low
 In blandishment, but a most silver flow
 Of subtle-paced counsel in distress,
 Right to the heart and brain, tho' unde-
 scried,
 Winning its way with extreme gentle-
 ness
 Thro' all the outworks of suspicious pride;
 A courage to endure and to obey;
 A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,
 Crown'd Isabel, thro' all her placid life,
 The queen of marriage, a most perfect
 wife.

III.

The mellow'd reflex of a winter moon;
 A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
 Till in its onward current it absorbs
 With swifter movement and in purer
 light
 The vex'd eddies of its wayward
 brother:
 A leaning and upbearing parasite,
 Clothing the stem, which else had
 fallen quite
 With cluster'd flower-bells and am-
 brosial orbs
 Of rich fruit-bunches leaning on each
 other—
 Shadow forth thee:—the world hath
 not another
 (Tho' all her fairest forms are types of
 thee,
 And thou of God in thy great charity)
 Of such a finish'd chasten'd purity.

MARIANA.

'Mariana in the moated grange.'

Measure for Measure.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
 Were thickly crusted, one and all:
 The rusted nails fell from the knots
 That held the pear to the gable-wall.
 The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
 Unlifted was the clinking latch;
 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
 Upon the lonely moated grange.
 She only said, 'My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said;
 She said, 'I am weary, weary,
 I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
 Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
 She could not look on the sweet heaven,
 Either at morn or eventide.
 After the flitting of the bats,
 When thickest dark did trance the sky,
 She drew her casement-curtain by,
 And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
 She only said, 'The night is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said;
 She said, 'I am weary, weary,
 I would that I were dead!'

Upon the middle of the night,
 Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
 The cock sung out an hour ere light:
 From the dark fen the oxen's low
 Came to her: without hope of change,
 In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
 Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed
 morn
 About the lonely moated grange.
 She only said, 'The day is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said;
 She said, 'I am weary, weary,
 I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall
 A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
 And o'er it many, round and small,
 The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.

Hard by a poplar shook alway,
 All silver-green with gnarled bark :
 For leagues no other tree did mark
 The level waste, the rounding gray.
 She only said, ' My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, ' I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

And ever when the moon was low,
 And the shrill winds were up and away,
 In the white curtain, to and fro,
 She saw the gusty shadow sway.
 But when the moon was very low,
 And wild winds bound within their cell,
 The shadow of the poplar fell
 Upon her bed, across her brow.
 She only said, ' The night is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, ' I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

All day within the dreamy house,
 The doors upon their hinges creak'd ;
 The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse
 Behind the mouldering wainscot
 shriek'd,
 Or from the crevice peer'd about.
 Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
 Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
 Old voices called her from without.
 She only said, ' My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, ' I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
 Which to the wooing wind aloof
 The poplar made, did all confound
 Her sense ; but most she loathed the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Was sloping toward his western bower.
 Then, said she, ' I am very dreary,
 He will not come,' she said ;
 She wept, ' I am aweary, aweary,
 Oh God, that I were dead !'

TO ———.

I.

CLEAR-HEADED friend, whose joyful scorn,
 Edged with sharp laughter, cuts atwain
 The knots that tangle human creeds,
 The wounding cords that bind and strain
 The heart until it bleeds,
 Ray-fringed eyelids of the morn
 Roof not a glance so keen as thine :
 If aught of prophecy be mine,
 Thou wilt not live in vain.

II.

Low-cowering shall the Sophist sit ;
 Falsehood shall bare her plaited brow :
 Fair-fronted Truth shall droop not now
 With shrilling shafts of subtle wit.
 Nor martyr-flames, nor trenchant swords
 Can do away that ancient lie ;
 A gentler death shall Falsehood die,
 Shot thro' and thro' with cunning words.

III.

Weak Truth a-leaning on her crutch,
 Wan, wasted Truth in her utmost need,
 Thy kingly intellect shall feed,
 Until she be an athlete bold,
 And weary with a finger's touch
 Those writhed limbs of lightning speed ;
 Like that strange angel which of old,
 Until the breaking of the light,
 Wrestled with wandering Israel,
 Past Yabbok brook the livelong night,
 And heaven's mazed signs stood still
 In the dim tract of Penuel.

MADELINE.

I.

THOU art not steep'd in golden languors,
 No tranced summer calm is thine,
 Ever varying Madeline.
 Thro' light and shadow thou dost range,
 Sudden glances, sweet and strange,
 Delicious spites and darling angers,
 And airy forms of flitting change.

II.

Smiling, frowning, evermore,
 Thou art perfect in love-lore.
 Revelings deep and clear are thine
 Of wealthy smiles: but who may know
 Whether smile or frown be fleeter?
 Whether smile or frown be sweeter,
 Who may know?

Frowns perfect-sweet along the brow
 Light-glooming over eyes divine,
 Like little clouds sun-fringed, are thine,

Ever varying Madeline.

Thy smile and frown are not aloof
 From one another,
 Each to each is dearest brother;
 Hues of the silken sheeny woof
 Momently shot into each other.

All the mystery is thine;

Smiling, frowning, evermore,
 Thou art perfect in love-lore,
 Ever varying Madeline.

III.

A subtle, sudden flame,
 By veering passion fann'd,
 About thee breaks and dances:
 When I would kiss thy hand,
 The flush of anger'd shame
 O'erflows thy calmer glances,
 And o'er black brows drops down
 A sudden-curved frown:
 But when I turn away,
 Thou, willing me to stay,
 Wooest not, nor vainly wranglest;
 But, looking fixedly the while,
 All my bounding heart entanglest
 In a golden-netted smile;
 Then in madness and in bliss,
 If my lips should dare to kiss
 Thy taper fingers amorously,
 Again thou blushest angerly;
 And o'er black brows drops down
 A sudden-curved frown.

SONG—THE OWL.

I.

WHEN cats run home and light is come,
 And dew is cold upon the ground,

And the far-off stream is dumb,
 And the whirring sail goes round,
 And the whirring sail goes round;
 Alone and warming his five wits,
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

II.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
 And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
 And the cock hath sung beneath the
 thatch

Twice or thrice his roundelay,
 Twice or thrice his roundelay;
 Alone and warming his five wits,
 The white owl in the belfry sits,

SECOND SONG.

TO THE SAME.

I.

THY tuwhits are lull'd, I wot,
 Thy tuwhoos of yesternight,
 Which upon the dark afloat,
 So took echo with delight,
 So took echo with delight,
 That her voice untuneful grown,
 Wears all day a fainter tone.

II.

I would mock thy chaunt anew;
 But I cannot mimick it;
 Not a whit of thy tuwhoo,
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,
 Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,
 With a lengthen'd loud halloo,
 Tuwhoo, tuwhit, tuwhit, tuwhoo-o-o.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE
ARABIAN NIGHTS.

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew
 free

In the silken sail of infancy,
 The tide of time flow'd back with me,
 The forward-flowing tide of time;
 And many a sheeny summer-morn,
 Adown the Tigris I was borne,

By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old ;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue :
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side :
In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moon-lit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
Until another night in night
I enter'd, from the clearer light,
Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the
dome

Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.
From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillets musical,
Thro' little crystal arches low
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fall'n silver-chiming, seemed to shake
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.

A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above thro' many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-colour'd shells
Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase, and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung ;
Not he : but something which possess'd
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd : the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwoo'd of summer wind :
A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots.
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame :
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
Entranced with that place and time,
So worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn—
 A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
 And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
 Full of the city's stilly sound,
 And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
 The stately cedar, tamarisks,
 Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
 Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
 Graven with emblems of the time,
 In honour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazed vision unawares
 From the long alley's latticed shade
 Emerged, I came upon the great
 Pavilion of the Caliphat.
 Right to the carven cedarn doors,
 Flung inward over spangled floors,
 Broad-based flights of marble stairs
 Ran up with golden balustrade,
 After the fashion of the time,
 And humour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
 As with the quintessence of flame,
 A million tapers flaring bright
 From twisted silvers look'd to shame
 The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
 Upon the mooned domes aloof
 In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
 Hundreds of crescents on the roof
 Of night new-risen, that marvellous time
 To celebrate the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly
 Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
 Serene with argent-lidded eyes
 Amorous, and lashes like to rays
 Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
 Tressed with redolent ebony,
 In many a dark delicious curl,
 Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone ;
 The sweetest lady of the time,
 Well worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
 Pure silver, underpropt a rich
 Throne of the massive ore, from which

Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
 Engarlanded and diaper'd
 With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
 Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
 With merriment of kingly pride,
 Sole star of all that place and time,
 I saw him—in his golden prime,
 THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

ODE TO MEMORY.

ADDRESSED TO —.

I.

THOU who stealest fire,
 From the fountains of the past,
 To glorify the present ; oh, haste,
 Visit my low desire !
 Strengthen me, enlighten me !
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

II.

Come not as thou camest of late,
 Flinging the gloom of yesternight
 On the white day ; but robed in soften'd
 light
 Of orient state.
 Whilome thou camest with the morning
 mist,
 Even as a maid, whose stately brow
 The dew-impearled winds of dawn have
 kiss'd,

When, she, as thou,
 Stays on her floating locks the lovely freight
 Of overflowing blooms, and earliest shoots
 Of orient green, giving safe pledge of fruits,
 Which in wintertide shall star
 The black earth with brilliance rare.

III.

Whilome thou camest with the morning
 mist,
 And with the evening cloud,
 Showering thy gleaned wealth into my
 open breast
 (Those peerless flowers which in the
 rudest wind
 Never grow sere,

When rooted in the garden of the mind,
Because they are the earliest of the year).

Nor was the night thy shroud.

In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest
Thou ledest by the hand thine infant
Hope.

The eddying of her garments caught from
thee

The light of thy great presence ; and the
cope

Of the half-attain'd futurity,

Tho' deep not fathomless,

Was cloven with the million stars which
tremble

O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.
Small thought was there of life's distress ;
For sure she deem'd no mist of earth
could dull

Those spirit-thrilling eyes so keen and
beautiful :

Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
Listening the lordly music flowing from
The illimitable years.

O strengthen me, enlighten me !

I faint in this obscurity,

Thou dewy dawn of memory.

IV.

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,
Thou of the many tongues, the myriad
eyes !

Thou comest not with shows of flaunting
vines

Unto mine inner eye,

Divinest Memory !

Thou wert not nursed by the waterfall
Which ever sounds and shines

A pillar of white light upon the wall
Of purple cliffs, aloof descried :
Come from the woods that belt the gray
hill-side,

The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,

In every elbow and turn,

The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland,

O ! hither lead thy feet !

Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled
folds,

Upon the ridged wolds,

When the first matin-song hath waken'd
loud

Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,

What time the amber morn

Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung
cloud.

V.

Large dowries doth the raptured eye
To the young spirit present

When first she is wed ;

And like a bride of old

In triumph led,

With music and sweet showers

Of festal flowers,

Unto the dwelling she must sway.

Well hast thou done, great artist Memory,

In setting round thy first experiment

With royal frame-work of wrought
gold ;

Needs must thou dearly love thy first
essay,

And foremost in thy various gallery

Place it, where sweetest sunlight falls

Upon the storied walls ;

For the discovery

And newness of thine art so pleased thee,
That all which thou hast drawn of fairest

Or boldest since, but lightly weighs

With thee unto the love thou bearest

The first-born of thy genius. Artist-like,

Ever retiring thou dost gaze

On the prime labour of thine early days :

No matter what the sketch might be ;

Whether the high field on the bushless

Pike,

Or even a sand-built ridge

Of heaped hills that mound the sea,

Overblown with murmurs harsh,

Or even a lowly cottage whence we see

Stretch'd wide and wild the waste enor-
mous marsh,

Where from the frequent bridge,

Like emblems of infinity,

The trenched waters run from sky to sky ;

Or a garden bower'd close

With plaited alleys of the trailing rose,
 Long alleys falling down to twilight grotts,
 Or opening upon level plots
 Of crowned lilies, standing near
 Purple-spiked lavender :
 Whither in after life retired
 From brawling storms,
 From weary wind,
 With youthful fancy re-inspired,
 We may hold converse with all forms
 Of the many-sided mind,
 And those whom passion hath not blinded,
 Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded.

My friend, with you to live alone,
 Were how much better than to own
 A crown, a sceptre, and a throne !

O strengthen me, enlighten me !
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

SONG.

I.

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
 Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :
 To himself he talks ;
 For at eventide, listening earnestly,
 At his work you may hear him sob and
 sigh
 In the walks ;
 Earthward he boweth the heavy
 stalks
 Of the mouldering flowers :
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

II.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
 As a sick man's room when he taketh
 repose
 An hour before death ;
 My very heart faints and my whole soul
 grieves
 At the moist rich smell of the rotting
 leaves,

And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
 And the year's last rose.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

A CHARACTER.

WITH a half-glance upon the sky
 At night he said, 'The wanderings
 Of this most intricate Universe
 Teach me the nothingness of things.'
 Yet could not all creation pierce
 Beyond the bottom of his eye.

He spake of beauty : that the dull
 Saw no divinity in grass,
 Life in dead stones, or spirit in air ;
 Then looking as 'twere in a glass,
 He smooth'd his chin and sleek'd his hair,
 And said the earth was beautiful.

He spake of virtue : not the gods
 More purely, when they wish to charm
 Pallas and Juno sitting by :
 And with a sweeping of the arm,
 And a lack-lustre dead-blue eye,
 Devolved his rounded periods.

Most delicately hour by hour
 He canvass'd human mysteries,
 And trod on silk, as if the winds
 Blew his own praises in his eyes,
 And stood aloof from other minds
 In impotence of fancied power.

With lips depress'd as he were meek,
 Himself unto himself he sold :
 Upon himself himself did feed :
 Quiet, dispassionate, and cold,
 And other than his form of creed,
 With chisell'd features clear and sleek.

THE POET.

THE poet in a golden clime was born,
 With golden stars above ;
 Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn
 of scorn,
 The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good
and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,

Before him lay : with echoing feet he
threaded
The secretest walks of fame :
The viewless arrows of his thoughts were
headed
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver
tongue,
And of so fierce a flight,
From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which
bore
Them earthward till they lit ;
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field
flower,
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth
anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance,
grew
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The winged shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breath-
ing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with
beams,
Tho' one did fling the fire.
Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many
dreams
Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the
world
Like one great garden show'd,
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark
upcurl'd,
Rare sunrise flow'd.

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning
eyes
Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes
Sunn'd by those orient skies ;
But round about the circles of the globes
Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in
flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
And as the lightning to the thunder
Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No
sword
Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his*
word
She shook the world.

THE POET'S MIND.

I.

VEX not thou the poet's mind
With thy shallow wit :
Vex not thou the poet's mind ;
For thou canst not fathom it.
Clear and bright it should be ever,
Flowing like a crystal river ;
Bright as light, and clear as wind.

II.

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not anear ;
All the place is holy ground ;
Hollow smile and frozen sneer
Come not here.
Holy water will I pour
Into every spicy flower
Of the laurel-shrubs that hedge it around.
The flowers would faint at your cruel
cheer.

In your eye there is death,
There is frost in your breath
Which would blight the plants.

Where you stand you cannot hear
From the groves within
The wild-bird's din.

In the heart of the garden the merry bird
chants.

It would fall to the ground if you came
in.

In the middle leaps a fountain
Like sheet lightning,
Ever brightening

With a low melodious thunder ;

All day and all night it is ever drawn
From the brain of the purple mountain
Which stands in the distance yonder :

It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
And the mountain draws it from Heaven
above,

And it sings a song of undying love ;
And yet, tho' its voice be so clear and
full,

You never would hear it ; your ears are
so dull ;

So keep where you are : you are foul with
sin ;

It would shrink to the earth if you came
in.

THE SEA-FAIRIES.

SLOW sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
Betwixt the green brink and the running
foam,

Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms
presf

To little harps of gold ; and while they
mused

Whispering to each other half in fear,
Shrill music reach'd them on the middle
sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither
away ? fly no more.

Whither away from the high green field,
and the happy blossoming shore ?

Day and night to the billow the fountain
calls :

Down shower the gambolling waterfalls
From wandering over the lea :
Out of the live-green heart of the dells
They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,
And thick with white bells the clover-hill
swells

High over the full-toned sea :
O hither, come hither and furl your sails,
Come hither to me and to me :
Hither, come hither and frolic and play ;
Here it is only the mew that wails ;

We will sing to you all the day :
Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,
For here are the blissful downs and dales,
And merrily, merrily carol the gales,
And the spangle dances in bight and bay,
And the rainbow forms and flies on the
land

Over the islands free ;
And the rainbow lives in the curve of the
sand ;

Hither, come hither and see ;
And the rainbow hangs on the poisoning
wave,

And sweet is the colour of cove and cave,
And sweet shall your welcome be :

O hither, come hither, and be our lords,
For merry brides are we :

We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak
sweet words :

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
With pleasure and love and jubilee :

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
When the sharp clear twang of the golden
chords

Runs up the ridged sea.

Who can light on as happy a shore

All the world o'er, all the world o'er ?

Whither away ? listen and stay : mariner,
mariner, fly no more.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

I.

LIFE and Thought have gone away

Side by side,

Leaving door and windows wide :
Careless tenants they !

II.

All within is dark as night :
In the windows is no light ;
And no murmur at the door,
So frequent on its hinge before.

III.

Close the door, the shutters close,
Or thro' the windows we shall see
The nakedness and vacancy
Of the dark deserted house.

IV:

Come away : no more of mirth
Is here or merry-making sound.
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.

V.

Come away : for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell ;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us !

THE DYING SWAN.

I.

THE plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
And loudly did lament.
It was the middle of the day.
Ever the weary wind went on,
And took the reed-tops as it went.

II.

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh ;
Above in the wind was the swallow,

Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and
still

The tangled water-courses siept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and
yellow.

III.

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow : at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear :
And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach
stole

Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear ;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold ;
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and
harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the even
ing star.

And the creeping mosses and clambering
weeds,

And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the sougling
reeds,

And the wave-worn horns of the echoing
bank,

And the silvery marish-flowers that
throng

The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

A DIRGE.

I.

Now is done thy long day's work ;
Fold thy palms across thy breast,
Fold thine arms, turn to thy rest.

Let them rave.

Shadows of the silver birk
Sweep the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

II.

Thee nor carketh care nor slander ;
Nothing but the small cold worm
Fretteth thine enshrouded form.

Let them rave.

Light and shadow ever wander
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

III.

Thou wilt not turn upon thy bed ;
Chaunteth not the brooding bee
Sweeter tones than calumny ?

Let them rave.

Thou wilt never raise thine head
From the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

IV.

Crocodiles wept tears for thee ;
The woodbine and eglare
Drip sweeter dew than traitor's tear.

Let them rave.

Rain makes music in the tree
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

V.

Round thee blow, self-pleached deep,
Bramble roses, faint and pale,
And long purples of the dale.

Let them rave.

These in every shower creep
Thro' the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VI.

The gold-eyed kingcups fine ,
The frail bluebell peereth over
Rare broidry of the purple clover.

Let them rave.

Kings have no such couch as thine,
As the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VII.

Wild words wander here and there :
God's great gift of speech abused
Makes thy memory confused :

But let them rave.

The balm-cricket carols clear
In the green that folds thy grave.
Let them rave.

LOVE AND DEATH.

WHAT time the mighty moon was gather-
ing light

Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise,
And all about him roll'd his lustrous eyes ;
When, turning round a cassia, full in view,
Death, walking all alone beneath a yew,
And talking to himself, first met his
sight :

' You must begone,' said Death, ' these
walks are mine.'

Love wept and spread his sheeny vans
for flight ;

Yet ere he parted said, ' This hour is
thine :

Thou art the shadow of life, and as the
tree

Stands in the sun and shadows all be-
neath,

So in the light of great eternity

Life eminent creates the shade of death ;
The shadow passeth when the tree shall
fall,

But I shall reign for ever over all.'

THE BALLAD OF ORIANA.

MY heart is wasted with my woe,
Oriana.

There is no rest for me below,
Oriana.

When the long dun wolds are ribb'd with
snow,

And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow,
Oriana,

Alone I wander to and fro,
Oriana.

Ere the light on dark was growing,
Oriana,

At midnight the cock was crowing,
Oriana :

Winds were blowing, waters flowing,
 We heard the steeds to battle going,
 Oriana ;
 Aloud the hollow bugle blowing,
 Oriana.

In the yew-wood black as night,
 Oriana,
 Ere I rode into the fight,
 Oriana,
 While blissful tears blinded my sight
 By star-shine and by moonlight,
 Oriana,
 I to thee my troth did plight,
 Oriana.

She stood upon the castle wall,
 Oriana :
 She watch'd my crest among them all,
 Oriana :
 She saw me fight, she heard me call,
 When forth there stept a foeman tall,
 Oriana,
 Atween me and the castle wall,
 Oriana.

The bitter arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The false, false arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The damned arrow glanced aside,
 And pierced thy heart, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !
 Thy heart, my life, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !

Oh ! narrow, narrow was the space,
 Oriana.
 Loud, loud rung out the bugle's brays,
 Oriana.
 Oh ! deathful stabs were dealt apace,
 The battle deepen'd in its place,
 Oriana ;
 But I was down upon my face,
 Oriana.

They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
 Oriana !
 How could I rise and come away,
 Oriana ?

How could I look upon the day ?
 They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
 Oriana—
 They should have trod me into clay,
 Oriana.

O breaking heart that will not break,
 Oriana !
 O pale, pale face so sweet and meek,
 Oriana !
 Thou smilest, but thou dost not speak,
 And then the tears run down my cheek,
 Oriana :
 What watest thou ? whom dost thou seek,
 Oriana ?

I cry aloud : none hear my cries,
 Oriana.
 Thou comest atween me and the skies,
 Oriana.
 I feel the tears of blood arise
 Up from my heart unto my eyes,
 Oriana.
 Within thy heart my arrow lies,
 Oriana.

O cursed hand ! O cursed blow !
 Oriana !
 O happy thou that liest low,
 Oriana !
 All night the silence seems to flow
 Beside me in my utter woe,
 Oriana.
 A weary, weary way I go,
 Oriana.

When Norland winds pipe down the sea,
 Oriana,
 I walk, I dare not think of thee,
 Oriana.
 Thou liest beneath the greenwood tree,
 I dare not die and come to thee,
 Oriana.
 I hear the roaring of the sea,
 Oriana.

CIRCUMSTANCE.

Two children in two neighbour villages
 Playing mad pranks along the heathy leas ;

Two strangers meeting at a festival ;
 Two lovers whispering by an orchard
 wall ;
 Two lives bound fast in one with golden
 ease ;
 Two graves grass-green beside a gray
 church-tower,
 Wash'd with still rains and daisy blos-
 somed ;
 Two children in one hamlet born and
 bred ;
 So runs the round of life from hour to
 hour.

THE MERMAN.

I.

Who would be
 A merman bold,
 Sitting alone,
 Singing alone
 Under the sea,
 With a crown of gold,
 On a throne ?

II.

I would be a merman bold,
 I would sit and sing the whole of the day ;
 I would fill the sea-halls with a voice of
 power ;
 But at night I would roam abroad and
 play
 With the mermaids in and out of the rocks,
 Dressing their hair with the white sea-
 flower ;
 And holding them back by their flowing
 locks
 I would kiss them often under the sea,
 And kiss them again till they kiss'd me
 Laughingly, laughingly ;
 And then we would wander away, away
 To the pale-green sea-groves straight and
 high,
 Chasing each other merrily.

III.

There would be neither moon nor star ;
 But the wave would make music above
 us afar—

Low thunder and light in the magic
 night—

Neither moon nor star.

We would call aloud in the dreamy dells,
 Call to each other and whoop and cry

All night, merrily, merrily ;

They would pelt me with starry spangles
 and shells,

Laughing and clapping their hands be-
 tween,

All night, merrily, merrily :

But I would throw to them back in mine
 Turkis and agate and almondine :

Then leaping out upon them unseen

I would kiss them often under the sea,

And kiss them again till they kiss'd me

Laughingly, laughingly.

Oh ! what a happy life were mine

Under the hollow-hung ocean green !

Soft are the moss-beds under the sea ;

We would live merrily, merrily.

THE MERMAID.

I.

Who would be
 A mermaid fair,
 Singing alone,
 Combing her hair
 Under the sea,
 In a golden curl
 With a comb of pearl,
 On a throne ?

II.

I would be a mermaid fair ;
 I would sing to myself the whole of the
 day ;
 With a comb of pearl I would comb my
 hair ;
 And still as I comb'd I would sing and
 say,
 ' Who is it loves me ? who loves not me ?'
 I would comb my hair till my ringlets
 would fall

Low adown, low adown,
 From under my starry sea-bud crown

Low adown and around,
 And I should look like a fountain of gold

Springing alone
 With a shrill inner sound,
 Over the throne
 In the midst of the hall ;
 Till that great sea-snake under the sea
 From his coiled sleeps in the central deeps
 Would slowly trail himself sevenfold
 Round the hall where I sate, and look
 in at the gate
 With his large calm eyes for the love of
 me.
 And all the mermen under the sea
 Would feel their immortality
 Die in their hearts for the love of me.

III.

But at night I would wander away, away,
 I would fling on each side my low-
 flowing locks,
 And lightly vault from the throne and play
 With the mermen in and out of the
 rocks ;
 We would run to and fro, and hide and
 seek,
 On the broad sea-wolds in the crimson
 shells,
 Whose silvery spikes are nighest the sea.
 But if any came near I would call, and
 shriek,
 And adown the steep like a wave I would
 leap
 From the diamond-ledges that jut from
 the dells ;
 For I would not be kiss'd by all who
 would list,
 Of the bold merry mermen under the
 sea ;
 They would sue me, and woo me, and
 flatter me,
 In the purple twilights under the sea ;
 But the king of them all would carry me,
 Woo me, and win me, and marry me,
 In the branching jaspers under the sea ;
 Then all the dry pied things that be
 In the hueless mosses under the sea
 Would curl round my silver feet silently,
 All looking up for the love of me.
 And if I should carol aloud, from aloft
 All things that are forked, and horned,
 and soft

Would lean out from the hollow sphere
 of the sea,
 All looking down for the love of me.

ADELINE.

I.

MYSTERY of mysteries,
 Faintly smiling Adeline,
 Scarce of earth nor all divine,
 Nor unhappy, nor at rest,
 But beyond expression fair
 With thy floating flaxen hair ;
 Thy rose-lips and full blue eyes
 Take the heart from out my breast.
 Wherefore those dim looks of thine,
 Shadowy, dreaming Adeline ?

II.

Whence that aery bloom of thine,
 Like a lily which the sun
 Looks thro' in his sad decline,
 And a rose-bush leans upon,
 Thou that faintly smilest still,
 As a Naiad in a well,
 Looking at the set of day,
 Or a phantom two hours old
 Of a maiden past away,
 Ere the placid lips be cold ?
 Wherefore those faint smiles of thine,
 Spiritual Adeline ?

III.

What hope or fear or joy is thine ?
 Who talketh with thee, Adeline ?
 For sure thou art not all alone.
 Do beating hearts of salient springs
 Keep measure with thine own ?
 Hast thou heard the butterflies
 What they say betwixt their wings ?
 Or in stillest evenings
 With what voice the violet woos
 To his heart the silver dews ?
 Or when little airs arise,
 How the merry bluebell rings
 To the mosses underneath ?
 Hast thou look'd upon the breath
 Of the lilies at sunrise ?

Wherefore that faint smile of thine,
Shadowy, dreaming Adeline?

IV.

Some honey-converse feeds thy mind,
Some spirit of a crimson rose
In love with thee forgets to close
His curtains, wasting odorous sighs
All night long on darkness blind.
What aileth thee? whom waitest thou
With thy soften'd, shadow'd brow,
And those dew-lit eyes of thine,
Thou faint smiler, Adeline?

V.

Lovest thou the doleful wind
When thou gazest at the skies?
Doth the low-tongued Orient
Wander from the side of the morn,
Dripping with Sabæan spice
On thy pillow, lowly bent
With melodious airs lovelorn,
Breathing Light against thy face,
While his locks a-drooping twined
Round thy neck in subtle ring
Make a carcanet of rays,
And ye talk together still,
In the language wherewith Spring
Letters cowslips on the hill?
Hence that look and smile of thine,
Spiritual Adeline.

MARGARET.

I.

O SWEET pale Margaret,
O rare pale Margaret,
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower?
Who lent you, love, your mortal dower
Of pensive thought and aspect pale,
Your melancholy sweet and frail
As perfume of the cuckoo-flower?
From the westward-winding flood,
From the evening-lighted wood,
From all things outward you have
won
A tearful grace, as tho' you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.

The very smile before you speak,
That dimples your transparent cheek,
Encircles all the heart, and feedeth
The senses with a still delight
Of dainty sorrow without sound,
Like the tender amber round,
Which the moon about her spreadeth,
Moving thro' a fleecy night.

II.

You love, remaining peacefully,
To hear the murmur of the strife,
But enter not the toil of life.
Your spirit is the calmed sea,
Laid by the tumult of the fight.
You are the evening star, alway
Remaining betwixt dark and bright:
Lull'd echoes of laborious day
Come to you, gleams of mellow light
Float by you on the verge of night.

III.

What can it matter, Margaret,
What songs below the waning stars
The lion-heart, Plantagenet,
Sang looking thro' his prison bars?
Exquisite Margaret, who can tell
The last wild thought of Chatelet,
Just ere the falling axe did part
The burning brain from the true heart,
Even in her sight he loved so well?

IV.

A fairy shield your Genius made
And gave you on your natal day.
Your sorrow, only sorrow's shade,
Keeps real sorrow far away.
You move not in such solitudes,
You are not less divine,
But more human in your moods,
Than your twin-sister, Adeline.
Your hair is darker, and your eyes
Touch'd with a somewhat darker hue,
And less ærially blue,
But ever trembling thro' the dew
Of dainty-woeful sympathies.

V.

O sweet pale Margaret,
O rare pale Margaret,

Come down, come down, and hear me
speak :

Tie up the ringlets on your cheek :

The sun is just about to set,

The arching limes are tall and shady,

And faint, rainy lights are seen,

Moving in the leavy beech.

Rise from the feast of sorrow, lady,

Where all day long you sit between

Joy and woe, and whisper each.

Or only look across the lawn,

Look out below your bower-eaves,

Look down, and let your blue eyes dawn

Upon me thro' the jasmine-leaves.

ROSALIND.

I.

My Rosalind, my Rosalind,
My frolic falcon, with bright eyes,
Whose free delight, from any height of
rapid flight,

Stoops at all game that wing the skies,

My Rosalind, my Rosalind,

My bright-eyed, wild-eyed falcon, whither,

Careless both of wind and weather,

Whither fly ye, what game spy ye,

Up or down the streaming wind?

II.

The quick lark's closest-caroll'd strains,

The shadow rushing up the sea,

The lightning flash atween the rains,

The sunlight driving down the lea,

The leaping stream, the very wind,

That will not stay, upon his way,

To stoop the cowslip to the plains,

Is not so clear and bold and free

As you, my falcon Rosalind.

You care not for another's pains,

Because you are the soul of joy,

Bright metal all without alloy.

Life shoots and glances thro' your veins,

And flashes off a thousand ways,

Thro' lips and eyes in subtle rays.

Your hawk-eyes are keen and bright,

Keen with triumph, watching still

To pierce me thro' with pointed light ;

But oftentimes they flash and glitter

Like sunshine on a dancing rill,
And your words are seeming-bitter,
Sharp and few, but seeming-bitter
From excess of swift delight.

III.

Come down, come home, my Rosalind,

My gay young hawk, my Rosalind :

Too long you keep the upper skies ;

Too long you roam and wheel at will ;

But we must hood your random eyes,

That care not whom they kill,

And your cheek, whose brilliant hue

Is so sparkling-fresh to view,

Some red heath-flower in the dew,

Touch'd with sunrise. We must bind

And keep you fast, my Rosalind,

Fast, fast, my wild-eyed Rosalind,

And clip your wings, and make you love :

When we have lured you from above,

And that delight of frolic flight, by day
or night,

From North to South,

We'll bind you fast in silken cords,

And kiss away the bitter words

From off your rosy mouth.

ELEÄNORE.

I.

Thy dark eyes open'd not,

Nor first reveal'd themselves to English
air,

For there is nothing here,
Which, from the outward to the inward
brought,

Moulded thy baby thought.

Far off from human neighbourhood,

Thou wert born, on a summer morn,
A mile beneath the cedar-wood.

Thy bounteous forehead was not fann'd

With breezes from our oaken glades,
But thou wert nursed in some delicious
land

Of lavish lights, and floating shades :
And flattering thy childish thought

The oriental fairy brought,

At the moment of thy birth,

From old well-heads of haunted rills,
 And the hearts of purple hills,
 And shadow'd coves on a sunny
 shore,
 The choicest wealth of all the
 earth,
 Jewel or shell, or starry ore,
 To deck thy cradle, Eleänore.

II.

Or the yellow-banded bees,
 Thro' half-open lattices
 Coming in the scented breeze,
 Fed thee, a child, lying alone,
 With whitest honey in fairy gar-
 dens cull'd—
 A glorious child, dreaming alone,
 In silk-soft folds, upon yielding down,
 With the hum of swarming bees
 Into dreamful slumber lull'd.

III.

Who may minister to thee?
 Summer herself should minister
 To thee, with fruitage golden-rinded
 On golden saucers, or it may be,
 Youngest Autumn, in a bower
 Grape-thicken'd from the light, and
 blinded
 With many a deep-hued bell-like
 flower
 Of fragrant trailers, when the air
 Sleepeth over all the heaven,
 And the crag that fronts the Even,
 All along the shadowing shore,
 Crimsons over an inland mere,
 Eleänore!

IV.

How may full-sail'd verse express,
 How may measured words adore
 The full-flowing harmony
 Of thy swan-like stateliness,
 Eleänore?
 The luxuriant symmetry
 Of thy floating gracefulness,
 Eleänore?
 Every turn and glance of thine,
 Every lineament divine,
 Eleänore,

And the steady sunset glow,
 That stays upon thee? For in thee
 Is nothing sudden, nothing single;
 Like two streams of incense free
 From one censer in one shrine,
 Thought and motion mingle,
 Mingle ever. Motions flow
 To one another, even as tho'
 They were modulated so
 To an unheard melody,
 Which lives about thee, and a sweep
 Of richest pauses, evermore
 Drawn from each other mellow-deep;
 Who may express thee, Eleänore?

V.

I stand before thee, Eleänore;
 I see thy beauty gradually unfold,
 Daily and hourly, more and more.
 I muse, as in a trance, the while
 Slowly, as from a cloud of gold,
 Comes out thy deep ambrosial smile.
 I muse, as in a trance, whene'er
 The languors of thy love-deep eyes
 Float on to me. I would I were
 So tranced, so rapt in ecstasies,
 To stand apart, and to adore,
 Gazing on thee for evermore,
 Serene, imperial Eleänore!

VI.

Sometimes, with most intensity
 Gazing, I seem to see
 Thought folded over thought, smiling
 asleep,
 Slowly awaken'd, grow so full and deep
 In thy large eyes, that, overpower'd quite,
 I cannot veil, or droop my sight,
 But am as nothing in its light:
 As tho' a star, in inmost heaven set,
 Ev'n while we gaze on it,
 Should slowly round his orb, and slowly
 grow
 To a full face, there like a sun remain
 Fix'd—then as slowly fade again,
 And draw itself to what it was
 before;
 So full, so deep, so slow,
 Thought seems to come and go
 In thy large eyes, imperial Eleänore.

VII.

As thunder-clouds that, hung on high,
 Roof'd the world with doubt and
 fear,
 Floating thro' an evening atmosphere,
 Grow golden all about the sky ;
 In thee all passion becomes passionless,
 Touch'd by thy spirit's mellowness,
 Losing his fire and active might
 In a silent meditation,
 Falling into a still delight,
 And luxury of contemplation :
 As waves that up a quiet cove
 Rolling slide, and lying still
 Shadow forth the banks at will :
 Or sometimes they swell and move,
 Pressing up against the land,
 With motions of the outer sea :
 And the self-same influence
 Controlleth all the soul and sense
 Of Passion gazing upon thee.
 His bow-string slacken'd, languid Love,
 Leaning his cheek upon his hand,
 Droops both his wings, regarding thee,
 And so would languish evermore,
 Serene, imperial Eleänore.

VIII.

But when I see thee roam, with tresses
 unconfined,
 While the amorous, odorous wind
 Breathes low between the sunset and
 the moon ;
 Or, in a shadowy saloon,
 On silken cushions half reclined ;
 I watch thy grace ; and in its place
 My heart a charmed slumber keeps,
 While I muse upon thy face ;
 And a languid fire creeps
 Thro' my veins to all my frame,
 Dissolvingly and slowly : soon
 From thy rose-red lips MY name
 Floweth ; and then, as in a swoon,
 With dinning sound my ears are rife,
 My tremulous tongue faltereth,
 I lose my colour, I lose my breath,
 I drink the cup of a costly death,
 Brimm'd with delirious draughts of warm-
 est life.

I die with my delight, before
 I hear what I would hear from
 thee ;

Yet tell my name again to me,
 I *would* be dying evermore,
 So dying ever, Eleänore.

KATĒ.

I KNOW her by her angry air,
 Her bright black eyes, her bright black
 hair,

Her rapid laughter wild and shrill,
 As laughter of the woodpecker
 From the bosom of a hill.

'Tis Kate—she sayeth what she will :

For Kate hath an unbridled tongue,
 Clear as the twanging of a harp.

Her heart is like a throbbing star.

Kate hath a spirit ever strong
 Like a new bow, and bright and sharp
 As edges of the scymetar.

Whence shall she take a fitting mate ?

For Kate no common love will feel ;

My woman-soldier, gallant Kate,
 As pure and true as blades of steel.

Kate saith ' the world is void of might.'

Kate saith ' the men are gilded flies.'

Kate snaps her fingers at my vows ;

Kate will not hear of lovers' sighs.

I would I were an armed knight,

Far-famed for well-won enterprise,

And wearing on my swarthy brows

The garland of new-wreathed emprise :

For in a moment I would pierce

The blackest files of clanging fight,

And strongly strike to left and right,

In dreaming of my lady's eyes.

Oh ! Kate loves well the bold and
 fierce ;

But none are bold enough for Kate
 She cannot find a fitting mate.

I.

MY life is full of weary days,

But good things have not kept aloof,
 Nor wander'd into other ways :

I have not lack'd thy mild reproof,
 Nor golden largess of thy praise.

And now shake hands across the brink
 Of that deep grave to which I go :
 Shake hands once more : I cannot sink
 So far—far down, but I shall know
 Thy voice, and answer from below.

II.

When in the darkness over me
 The four-handed mole shall scrape,
 Plant thou no dusky cypress-tree,
 Nor wreath thy cap with doleful crape,
 But pledge me in the flowing grape.

And when the sappy field and wood
 Grow green beneath the showery gray,
 And rugged barks begin to bud,
 And thro' damp holts new-flush'd with
 may,
 Ring sudden scritchcs of the jay,

Then let wise Nature work her will,
 And on my clay her darnel grow ;
 Come only, when the days are still,
 And at my headstone whisper low,
 And tell me if the woodbines blow.

EARLY SONNETS.

I.

TO ———.

As when with downcast eyes we muse and
 brood,
 And ebb into a former life, or seem
 To lapse far back in some confused dream
 To states of mystical similitude ;
 If one but speaks or hems or stirs his chair,
 Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,
 So that we say, 'All this hath been before,
 All this hath been, I know not when or
 where.'
 So, friend, when first I look'd upon your
 face,
 Our thought gave answer each to each, so
 true—
 Opposed mirrors each reflecting each—
 That tho' I knew not in what time or place,
 Methought that I had often met with you,
 And either lived in either's heart and
 speech.

II.

TO J. M. K.

My hope and heart is with thee—thou
 wilt be
 A latter Luther, and a soldier-priest
 To scare church-harpies from the master's
 feast ;
 Our dusted velvets have much need of
 thee :
 Thou art no sabbath-drawler of old saws,
 Distill'd from some worm-canker'd
 homily ;
 But spurr'd at heart with fieriest energy
 To embattail and to wall about thy cause
 With iron-worded proof, hating to hark
 The humming of the drowsy pulpit-drone
 Half God's good sabbath, while the worn-
 out clerk
 Brow-beats his desk below. Thou from
 a throne
 Mounted in heaven wilt shoot into the
 dark
 Arrows of lightnings. I will stand and
 mark.

III.

MINE be the strength of spirit, full and
 free,
 Like some broad river rushing down
 alone,
 With the selfsame impulse wherewith he
 was thrown
 From his loud fount upon the echoing
 lea :—
 Which with increasing might doth forward
 flee
 By town, and tower, and hill, and cape,
 and isle,
 And in the middle of the green salt sea
 Keeps his blue waters fresh for many a mile.
 Mine be the power which ever to its sway
 Will win the wise at once, and by degrees
 May into uncongenial spirits flow ;
 Ev'n as the warm gulf-stream of Florida
 Floats far away into the Northern seas
 The lavish growths of southern Mexico.

IV.

ALEXANDER.

WARRIOR of God, whose strong right
 arm debased
 The throne of Persia, when her Satrap
 bled
 At Issus by the Syrian gates, or fled
 Beyond the Memmian naphtha-pits, dis-
 graced
 For ever—thee (thy pathway sand-erased)
 Gliding with equal crowns two serpents
 led
 Joyful to that palm-planted fountain-fed
 Ammonian Oasis in the waste.
 There in a silent shade of laurel brown
 Apart the Chamian Oracle divine
 Shelter'd his unapproached mysteries :
 High things were spoken there, unhanded
 down ;
 Only they saw thee from the secret shrine
 Returning with hot cheek and kindled
 eyes.

V.

BUONAPARTE.

HE thought to quell the stubborn hearts
 of oak,
 Madman !—to chain with chains, and bind
 with bands
 That island queen who sways the floods
 and lands
 From Ind to Ind, but in fair daylight woke,
 When from her wooden walls,—lit by
 sure hands,—
 With thunders, and with lightnings, and
 with smoke,—
 Peal after peal, the British battle broke,
 Lulling the brine against the Coptic sands.
 We taught him lowlier moods, when El-
 sinore
 Heard the war moan along the distant sea,
 Rocking with shatter'd spars, with sudden
 fires
 Flamed over : at Trafalgar yet once more
 We taught him : late he learned humility
 Perforce, like those whom Gideon school'd
 with briers.

VI.

POLAND.

How long, O God, shall men be ridden
 down,
 And trampled under by the last and least
 Of men? The heart of Poland hath not
 ceased
 To quiver, tho' her sacred blood doth
 drown
 The fields, and out of every smouldering
 town
 Cries to Thee, lest brute Power be in-
 creased,
 Till that o'ergrown Barbarian in the East
 Transgress his ample bound to some new
 crown :—
 Cries to Thee, 'Lord, how long shall
 these things be?
 How long this icy-hearted Muscovite
 Oppress the region?' Us, O Just and
 Good,
 Forgive, who smiled when she was torn
 in three ;
 Us, who stand now, when we should aid
 the right—
 A matter to be wept with tears of blood !

VII.

CARESS'D or chidden by the slender hand,
 And singing airy trifles this or that,
 Light Hope at Beauty's call would perch
 and stand,
 And run thro' every change of sharp and
 flat ;
 And Fancy came and at her pillow sat,
 When Sleep had bound her in his rosy
 band,
 And chased away the still-recurring gnat,
 And woke her with a lay from fairy land.
 But now they live with Beauty less and
 less,
 For Hope is other Hope and wanders far,
 Nor cares to lisp in love's delicious creeds ;
 And Fancy watches in the wilderness,
 Poor Fancy sadder than a single star,
 That sets at twilight in a land of reeds.

VIII.

THE form, the form alone is eloquent !
 A nobler yearning never broke her rest
 Than but to dance and sing, be gaily
 drest,
 And win all eyes with all accomplish-
 ment :
 Yet in the whirling dances as we went,
 My fancy made me for a moment blest
 To find my heart so near the beauteous
 breast
 That once had power to rob it of content.
 A moment came the tenderness of tears,
 The phantom of a wish that once could
 move,
 A ghost of passion that no smiles re-
 store—
 For ah ! the slight coquette, she cannot
 love,
 And if you kiss'd her feet a thousand
 years,
 She still would take the praise, and care
 no more.

IX.

WAN Sculptor, weepst thou to take the
 cast
 Of those dead lineaments that near thee
 lie ?
 O sorrowest thou, pale Painter, for the
 past,
 In painting some dead friend from memory ?
 Weep on : beyond his object Love can
 last :
 His object lives : more cause to weep
 have I :
 My tears, no tears of love, are flowing fast,
 No tears of love, but tears that Love can
 die.
 I pledge her not in any cheerful cup,
 Nor care to sit beside her where she sits—
 Ah pity—hint it not in human tones,
 But breathe it into earth and close it up
 With secret death for ever, in the pits
 Which some green Christmas crams with
 weary bones.

X.

IF I were loved, as I desire to be,
 What is there in the great sphere of the
 earth,

And range of evil between death and birth,
 That I should fear,—if I were loved by
 thee ?

All the inner, all the outer-world of pain
 Clear Love would pierce and cleave, if
 thou wert mine,

As I have heard that, somewhere in the
 main,

Fresh-water springs come up through
 bitter brine.

'Twere joy, not fear, claspt hand-in-hand
 with thee,

To wait for death—mute—careless of all
 ills,

Apart upon a mountain, tho' the surge
 Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
 Flung leagues of roaring foam into the
 gorge

Below us, as far on as eye could see.

XI.

THE BRIDESMAID.

O BRIDESMAID, ere the happy knot was
 tied,

Thine eyes so wept that they could hardly
 see ;

Thy sister smiled and said, ' No tears for
 me !

A happy bridesmaid makes a happy bride.'
 And then, the couple standing side by

side,
 Love lighted down between them full of
 glee,

And over his left shoulder laugh'd at
 thee,

' O happy bridesmaid, make a happy
 bride.'

And all at once a pleasant truth I learn'd,
 For while the tender service made thee
 weep,

I loved thee for the tear thou couldst not
 hide,

And prest thy hand, and knew the press
 return'd,

And thought, ' My life is sick of single
 sleep :

O happy bridesmaid, make a happy
 bride !'

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

AND OTHER POEMS.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

PART I.

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;
And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot ;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river

Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses ; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd

Skimming down to Camelot :
But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot :
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers ' 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II.

THERE she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.

She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot :
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot ;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two :
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot :
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed ;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III.

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,

That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot :
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complain-
ing,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot ;
Down she came and found a boat

Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay ;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot :
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this ? and what is here ?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer ;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot :
But Lancelot mused a little space ;
He said, 'She has a lovely face ;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

MARIANA IN THE SOUTH.

WITH one black shadow at its feet,
The house thro' all the level shines,
Close-latticed to the brooding heat,
And silent in its dusty vines :

A faint-blue ridge upon the right,
An empty river-bed before,
And shallows on a distant shore,
In glaring sand and inlets bright.

But 'Ave Mary,' made she moan,
And 'Ave Mary,' night and morn,
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

She, as her carol sadder grew,
From brow and bosom slowly down
Thro' rosy taper fingers drew
Her streaming curls of deepest brown
To left and right, and made appear
Still-lighted in a secret shrine,
Her melancholy eyes divine,
The home of woe without a tear.

And 'Ave Mary,' was her moan,
'Madonna, 'sad is night and morn,'
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

Till all the crimson changed, and past
Into deep orange o'er the sea,
Low on her knees herself she cast,
Before Our Lady murmur'd she ;
Complaining, 'Mother, give me grace
To help me of my weary load.'

And on the liquid mirror glow'd
The clear perfection of her face.
'Is this the form,' she made her
moan,
'That won his praises night and
morn?'

And 'Ah,' she said, 'but I wake
alone,
I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn.'

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
But day increased from heat to heat,
On stony drought and steaming salt ;
Till now at noon she slept again,
And seem'd knee-deep in mountain
grass,
And heard her native breezes pass,

And runlets babbling down the glen.
She breathed in sleep a lower moan,
And murmuring, as at night and
morn,
She thought, 'My spirit is here alone,
Walks forgotten, and is forlorn.'

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream :
She felt he was and was not there.
She woke : the babble of the stream
Fell, and, without, the steady glare
Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
The river-bed was dusty-white ;
And all the furnace of the light
Struck up against the blinding wall.
She whisper'd, with a stifled moan
More inward than at night or morn,
'Sweet Mother, let me not here alone
Live forgotten and die forlorn.'

And, rising, from her bosom drew
Old letters, breathing of her worth,
For 'Love,' they said, 'must needs be
true,

To what is loveliest upon earth.'
An image seem'd to pass the door,
To look at her with slight, and say
'But now thy beauty flows away,
So be alone for evermore.'
'O cruel heart,' she changed her tone,
'And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
Is this the end to be left alone,
To live forgotten, and die forlorn?'

But sometimes in the falling day
An image seem'd to pass the door,
To look into her eyes and say,
'But thou shalt be alone no more.'
And flaming downward over all
From heat to heat the day decreased,
And slowly rounded to the east
The one black shadow from the wall.
'The day to night,' she made her
moan,
'The day to night, the night to
morn,
And day and night I am left alone
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

At eve a dry cicala sung,
There came a sound as of the sea ;

Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
 And lean'd upon the balcony.
 There all in spaces rosy-bright
 Large Hesper glitter'd on her tears,
 And deepening thro' the silent spheres
 Heaven over Heaven rose the night.
 And weeping then she made her moan,
 'The night comes on that knows not
 morn,
 When I shall cease to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

THE TWO VOICES.

A STILL small voice spake unto me,
 'Thou art so full of misery,
 Were it not better not to be?'

Then to the still small voice I said ;
 'Let me not cast in endless shade
 What is so wonderfully made.'
 To which the voice did urge reply ;
 'To-day I saw the dragon-fly
 Come from the wells where he did lie.

'An inner impulse rent the veil
 Of his old husk : from head to tail
 Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

'He dried his wings : like gauze they grew ;
 Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
 A living flash of light he flew.'

I said, 'When first the world began,
 Young Nature thro' five cycles ran,
 And in the sixth she moulded man.

'She gave him mind, the lordliest
 Proportion, and, above the rest,
 Dominion in the head and breast.'

Thereto the silent voice replied ;
 'Self-blinded are you by your pride :
 Look up thro' night : the world is wide.

'This truth within thy mind rehearse,
 That in a boundless universe
 Is boundless better, boundless worse.

'Think you this mould of hopes and fears
 Could find no statelier than his peers
 In yonder hundred million spheres?'

It spake, moreover, in my mind :
 'Tho' thou wert scatter'd to the wind,
 Yet is there plenty of the kind.'

Then did my response clearer fall :
 'No compound of this earthly ball
 Is like another, all in all.'

To which he answer'd scoffingly ;
 'Good soul ! suppose I grant it thee,
 Who'll weep for thy deficiency?'

'Or will one beam be less intense,
 When thy peculiar difference
 Is cancell'd in the world of sense?'

I would have said, 'Thou canst not know,'
 But my full heart, that work'd below,
 Rain'd thro' my sight its overflow.

Again the voice spake unto me :
 'Thou art so steep'd in misery,
 Surely 'twere better not to be.

'Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
 Nor any train of reason keep :
 Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.'

I said, 'The years with change advance :
 If I make dark my countenance,
 I shut my life from happier chance.

'Some turn this sickness yet might take,
 Ev'n yet.' But he : 'What drug can make
 A wither'd palsy cease to shake?'

I wept, 'Tho' I should die, I know
 That all about the thorn will blow
 In tufts of rosy-tinted snow ;

'And men, thro' novel spheres of thought
 Still moving after truth long sought,
 Will learn new things when I am not.'

'Yet,' said the secret voice, 'some time,
 Sooner or later, will gray prime
 Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

'Not less swift souls that yearn for light,
 Rapt after heaven's starry flight,
 Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

'Not less the bee would range her cells,
 The furzy prickle fire the dells,
 The foxglove cluster dappled bells.'

I said that 'all the years invent ;
Each month is various to present
The world with some development.

'Were this not well, to bide mine hour,
Tho' watching from a ruin'd tower
How grows the day of human power ?'

'The highest-mounted mind,' he said,
'Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

'Will thirty seasons render plain
Those lonely lights that still remain,
Just breaking over land and main ?

'Or make that morn, from his cold crown
And crystal silence creeping down,
Flood with full daylight glebe and town ?

'Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream'd not yet.

'Thou hast not gain'd a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

'Twere better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

'Moreover, but to seem to find
Asks what thou lackest, thought resign'd,
A healthy frame, a quiet mind.'

I said, 'When I am gone away,
"He dared not tarry," men will say,
Doing dishonour to my clay.'

'This is more vile,' he made reply,
'To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,
Than once from dread of pain to die.

'Sick art thou—a divided will
Still heaping on the fear of ill
The fear of men, a coward still.

'Do men love thee ? Art thou so bound
To men, that how thy name may sound
Will vex thee lying underground ?

'The memory of the wither'd leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garner'd Autumn-sheaf.

'Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust ;
The right ear, that is fill'd with dust,
Hears little of the false or just.'

'Hard task, to pluck resolve,' I cried,
'From emptiness and the waste wide
Of that abyss, or scornful pride !

'Nay—rather yet that I could raise
One hope that warm'd me in the days
While still I yearn'd for human praise.

'When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash'd and rung.

'I sung the joyful Pæan clear,
And, sitting, burnish'd without fear
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

'Waiting to strive a happy strife,
To war with falsehood to the knife,
And not to lose the good of life—

'Some hidden principle to move,
To put together, part and prove,
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

'As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about—

'To search thro' all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law :

'At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

'To pass, when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

'In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour'd, known,
And like a warrior overthrown ;

'Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war-song thrill his ears :

'Then dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke '

'Yea!' said the voice, 'thy dream was good,
While thou abodest in the bud.
It was the stirring of the blood.

'If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour?

'Then comes the check, the change, the
fall,
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall.
There is one remedy for all.

'Yet hadst thou, thro' enduring pain,
Link'd month to month with such a chain
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

'Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little-worth.

'That men with knowledge merely play'd,
I told thee—hardly nigher made,
Tho' scaling slow from grade to grade;

'Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

'For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

'Cry, faint not: either Truth is born
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,
Or in the gateways of the morn.

'Cry, faint not, climb: the summits slope
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope.

'Sometimes a little corner shines,
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

'I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now.
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

'If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost
strike,
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like;

'And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor,
Calling thyself a little lower

'Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl!
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
There is one remedy for all.'

'O dull, one-sided voice,' said I,
'Wilt thou make everything a lie,
To flatter me that I may die?

'I know that age to age succeeds,
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
A dust of systems and of creeds.

'I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven':

'Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream;

'But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev'n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head—

'Which did accomplish their desire,
Bore and forebore, and did not tire,
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

'He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Tho' cursed and scorn'd, and bruised
with stones:

'But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray'd, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.'

The sullen answer slid betwixt:
'Not that the grounds of hope were
fix'd,

The elements were kindlier mix'd.'

I said, 'I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse.

'And that, in seeking to undo
One riddle, and to find the true,
I knit a hundred others new:

'Or that this anguish fleeting hence,
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,
Be fix'd and froz'n to permanence:

'For I go, weak from suffering here:
Naked I go, and void of cheer:
What is it that I may not fear?'

'Consider well,' the voice replied,
'His face, that two hours since hath died ;
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride ?

'Will he obey when one commands ?
Or answer should one press his hands ?
He answers not, nor understands.

'His palms are folded on his breast :
There is no other thing express'd
But long disquiet merged in rest.

'His lips are very mild and meek :
Tho' one should smite him on the cheek,
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

'His little daughter, whose sweet face
He kiss'd, taking his last embrace,
Becomes dishonour to her race—

'His sons grow up that bear his name,
Some grow to honour, some to shame,—
But he is chill to praise or blame.

'He will not hear the north-wind rave,
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave
From winter rains that beat his grave.

'High up the vapours fold and swim :
About him broods the twilight dim :
The place he knew forgetteth him.'

'If all be dark, vague voice,' I said,
'These things are wrapt in doubt and
dread,
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

'The sap dries up : the plant declines.
A deeper tale my heart divines.
Know I not Death ? the outward signs ?

'I found him when my years were few ;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew.

'From grave to grave the shadow crept :
In her still place the morning wept :
Touch'd by his feet the daisy slept.

'The simple senses crown'd his head :
"Omega ! thou art Lord," they said,
"We find no motion in the dead."

'Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease ?

'Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense ?

'He owns the fatal gift of eyes,
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

'Here sits he shaping wings to fly :
His heart forebodes a mystery :
He names the name Eternity.

'That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

'He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

'The end and the beginning vex
His reason : many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.

'He knows a baseness in his blood
At such strange war with something
good,
He may not do the thing he would.

'Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

'Ah ! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt,

'But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

'The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve.'

As when a billow, blown against,
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced
A little ceased, but recommenced.

'Where wert thou when thy father play'd
In his free field, and pastime made,
A merry boy in sun and shade ?

'A merry boy they call'd him then,
He sat upon the knees of men
In days that never come again.

'Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man :

'Who took a wife, who rear'd his race,
Whose wrinkles gather'd on his face,
Whose troubles number with his days :

'A life of nothings, nothing-worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth !'

'These words,' I said, 'are like the rest ;
No certain clearness, but at best
A vague suspicion of the breast :

'But if I grant, thou mightst defend
The thesis which thy words intend—
That to begin implies to end ;

'Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mould ?

'I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain.

'It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

'As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping thro' from state to state.

'As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.

'So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

'But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace ;

'Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning toward the lamps of
night ;

'Or if thro' lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

'I might forget my weaker lot ;
For is not our first year forgot ?
The haunts of memory echo not.

'And men, whose reason long was blind,
From cells of madness unconfined,
Oft lose whole years of darker mind.

'Much more, if first I floated free,
As naked essence, must I be
Incompetent of memory :

'For memory dealing but with time,
And he with matter, could she climb
Beyond her own material prime ?

'Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

'Of something felt, like something here ;
Of something done, I know not where ;
Such as no language may declare.'

The still voice laugh'd. 'I talk,' said he,
'Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality.'

'But thou,' said I, 'hast missed thy
mark,
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,
By making all the horizon dark.

'Why not set forth, if I should do
This rashness, that which might ensue
With this old soul in organs new ?

'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant ;
More life, and fuller, that I want.'

I ceased, and sat as one forlorn.
Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,
'Behold, it is the Sabbath morn.'

And I arose, and I released
The casement, and the light increased
With freshness in the dawning east.

Like soften'd airs that blowing steal,
When meres begin to uncongeal,
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest :
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wander'd on :
I spoke, but answer came there none :
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper silver-clear,
A murmur, 'Be of better cheer.'

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
'I see the end, and know the good.'

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper breathing low,
'I may not speak of what I know.'

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes :

Such seem'd the whisper at my side :
'What is it thou knowest, sweet voice ?'
I cried.

'A hidden hope,' the voice replied :

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers :
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wonder'd, while I paced along :
The woods were fill'd so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong;

And all so variously wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought ;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, 'Rejoice ! Rejoice !'

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER.

I SEE the wealthy miller yet,
His double chin, his portly size,
And who that knew him could forget
The busy wrinkles round his eyes ?
The slow wise smile that, round about
His dusty forehead drily curl'd,
Seem'd half-within and half-without,
And full of dealings with the world ?

In yonder chair I see him sit,
Three fingers round the old silver cup—
I see his gray eyes twinkle yet
At his own jest—gray eyes lit up
With summer lightnings of a soul
So full of summer warmth, so glad,
So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,
His memory scarce can make me sad.

Yet fill my glass : give me one kiss :
My own sweet Alice, we must die.
There's somewhat in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by and by.

There's somewhat flows to us in life,
 But more is taken quite away.
 Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,
 That we may die the self-same day.

Have I not found a happy earth?
 I least should breathe a thought of
 pain.

Would God renew me from my birth
 I'd almost live my life again.
 So sweet it seems with thee to walk,
 And once again to woo thee mine—
 It seems in after-dinner talk
 Across the walnuts and the wine—

To be the long and listless boy
 Late-left an orphan of the squire,
 Where this old mansion mounted high
 Looks down upon the village spire:
 For even here, where I and you
 Have lived and loved alone so long,
 Each morn my sleep was broken thro'
 By some wild skylark's matin song.

And oft I heard the tender dove
 In firry woodlands making moan;
 But ere I saw your eyes, my love,
 I had no motion of my own.
 For scarce my life with fancy play'd
 Before I dream'd that pleasant dream—
 Still hither thither idly sway'd
 Like those long mosses in the stream.

Or from the bridge I lean'd to hear
 The milldam rushing down with noise,
 And see the minnows everywhere
 In crystal eddies glance and poise,
 The tall flag-flowers when they sprung
 Below the range of stepping-stones,
 Or those three chestnuts near, that hung
 In masses thick with milky cones.

But, Alice, what an hour was that,
 When after roving in the woods
 ('Twas April then), I came and sat
 Below the chestnuts, when their buds
 Were glistening to the breezy blue;
 And on the slope, an absent fool,
 I cast me down, nor thought of you,
 But angled in the higher pool.

A love-song I had somewhere read,
 An echo from a measured strain,
 Beat time to nothing in my head
 From some odd corner of the brain.
 It haunted me, the morning long,
 With weary sameness in the rhymes,
 The phantom of a silent song,
 That went and came a thousand times.

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
 I watch'd the little circles die;
 They past into the level flood,
 And there a vision caught my eye;
 The reflex of a beauteous form,
 A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,
 As when a sunbeam wavers warm
 Within the dark and dimpled beck.

For you remember, you had set,
 That morning, on the casement-edge
 A long green box of mignonette,
 And you were leaning from the ledge
 And when I raised my eyes, above
 They met with two so full and bright—
 Such eyes! I swear to you, my love,
 That these have never lost their light.

I loved, and love dispell'd the fear
 That I should die an early death:
 For love possess'd the atmosphere,
 And fill'd the breast with purer breath.
 My mother thought, What ails the boy?
 For I was alter'd, and began
 To move about the house with joy,
 And with the certain step of man.

I loved the brimming wave that swam
 Thro' quiet meadows round the mill,
 The sleepy pool above the dam,
 The pool beneath it never still,
 The meal-sacks on the whiten'd floor,
 The dark round of the dripping
 wheel,
 The very air about the door
 Made misty with the floating meal.

And oft in ramblings on the wold,
 When April nights began to blow,
 And April's crescent glimmer'd cold,
 I saw the village lights below;

I knew your taper far away,
And full at heart of trembling hope,
From off the wold I came, and lay
Upon the freshly-flower'd slope.

The deep brook groan'd beneath the mill ;
And 'by that lamp,' I thought, 'she sits !'
The white chalk-quarry from the hill
Gleam'd to the flying moon by fits.
'O that I were beside her now !
O will she answer if I call ?
O would she give me vow for vow,
Sweet Alice, if I told her all ?'

Sometimes I saw you sit and spin ;
And, in the pauses of the wind,
Sometimes I heard you sing within ;
Sometimes your shadow cross'd the blind.

At last you rose and moved the light,
And the long shadow of the chair
Flitted across into the night,
And all the casement darken'd there.

But when at last I dared to speak,
The lanes, you know, were white with
 may,
Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek
Flush'd like the coming of the day ;
And so it was—half-sly, half-shy,
You would, and would not, little one !
Although I pleaded tenderly,
And you and I were all alone.

And slowly was my mother brought
To yield consent to my desire :
She wish'd me happy, but she thought
I might have look'd a little higher ;
And I was young—too young to wed :
'Yet must I love her for your sake ;
Go fetch your Alice here,' she said :
Her eyelid quiver'd as she spake.

And down I went to fetch my bride :
But, Alice, you were ill at ease ;
This dress and that by turns you tried,
Too fearful that you should not please.
I loved you better for your fears,
I knew you could not look but well ;
And dews, that would have fall'n in tears,
I kiss'd away before they fell.

I watch'd the little flutterings,
The doubt my mother would not see ;
She spoke at large of many things,
And at the last she spoke of me ;
And turning look'd upon your face,
As near this door you sat apart,
And rose, and, with a silent grace
Approaching, press'd you heart to heart.

Ah, well—but sing the foolish song
I gave you, Alice, on the day
When, arm in arm, we went along,
A pensive pair, and you were gay
With bridal flowers—that I may seem,
As in the nights of old, to lie
Beside the mill-wheel in the stream,
While those full chestnuts whisper by.

It is the miller's daughter,
And she is grown so dear, so dear,
That I would be the jewel
That trembles in her ear :
For hid in ringlets day and night,
I'd touch her neck so warm and white.

And I would be the girdle
About her dainty dainty waist,
And her heart would beat against me,
In sorrow and in rest :
And I should know if it beat right,
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

And I would be the necklace,
And all day long to fall and rise
Upon her balmy bosom,
With her laughter or her sighs,
And I would lie so light, so light,
I scarce should be unclasp'd at night.

A trifle, sweet ! which true love spells—
True love interprets—right alone.
His light upon the letter dwells,
For all the spirit is his own.
So, if I waste words now, in truth
You must blame Love. His early rage
Had force to make me rhyme in youth,
And makes me talk too much in age.

And now those vivid hours are gone,
Like mine own life to me thou art,
Where Past and Present, wound in one,
Do make a garland for the heart :

So sing that other song I made,
 Half-anger'd with my happy lot,
 The day, when in the chestnut shade
 I found the blue Forget-me-not.

Love that hath us in the net,
 Can he pass, and we forget?
 Many suns arise and set.
 Many a chance the years beget.
 Love the gift is Love the debt.

Even so.

Love is hurt with jar and fret.
 Love is made a vague regret.
 Eyes with idle tears are wet.
 Idle habit links us yet.
 What is love? for we forget :

Ah, no ! no !

Look thro' mine eyes with thine. True
 wife,

Round my true heart thine arms entwined
 My other dearer life in life,

Look thro' my very soul with thine !
 Untouch'd with any shade of years,

May those kind eyes for ever dwell !
 They have not shed a many tears,
 Dear eyes, since first I knew them
 well.

Yet tears they shed : they had their part

Of sorrow : for when time was ripe,

The still affection of the heart

Became an outward breathing type,

That into stillness past again,

And left a want unknown before ;

Although the loss had brought us pain,

That loss but made us love the more,

With farther lookings on. The kiss,

The woven arms, seem but to be

Weak symbols of the settled bliss,

The comfort, I have found in thee :

But that God bless thee, dear—who
 wrought

Two spirits to one equal mind—

With blessings beyond hope or thought,

With blessings which no words can find.

Arise, and let us wander forth,

To yon old mill across the wolds ;

For look, the sunset, south and north,

Winds all the vale in rosy folds,

And fires your narrow casement glass,
 Touching the sullen pool below :
 On the chalk-hill the bearded grass
 Is dry and dewless. Let us go.

FATIMA.

O LOVE, Love, Love ! O withering might !

O sun, that from thy noonday height

Shudderest when I strain my sight,

Throbbing thro' all thy heat and light,

Lo, falling from my constant mind,

Lo, parch'd and wither'd, deaf and blind,

I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.

Last night I wasted hateful hours

Below the city's eastern towers :

I thirsted for the brooks, the showers :

I roll'd among the tender flowers :

I crush'd them on my breast, my mouth ;

I look'd athwart the burning drouth

Of that long desert to the south.

Last night, when some one spoke his
 name,

From my swift blood that went and came

A thousand little shafts of flame

Were shiver'd in my narrow frame.

O Love, O fire ! once he drew

With one long kiss my whole soul thro'

My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

Before he mounts the hill, I know

He cometh quickly : from below

Sweet gales, as from deep gardens, blow

Before him, striking on my brow.

In my dry brain my spirit soon,

Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,

Faints like a dazzled morning moon.

The wind sounds like a silver wire,

And from beyond the noon a fire

Is pour'd upon the hills, and nigher

The skies stoop down in their desire ;

And, isled in sudden seas of light,

My heart, pierced thro' with fierce
 delight,

Bursts into blossom in his sight.

My whole soul waiting silently,

All naked in a sultry sky,

Droops blinded with his shining eye :
I *will*, possess him or will die.

I will grow round him in his place,
Grow, live, die looking on his face,
Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace.

CENONE.

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the
glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine
to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either
hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway
down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them
roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n
ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning : but in
front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Cenone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round
her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with
vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-
shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the
upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill :
The grasshopper is silent in the grass :
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are
dead.
The purple flower droops : the golden bee

Is lily-cradled : I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are
dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O
Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake ! O
mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape : for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine :
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd,
white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft :
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-
dropt eyes
I sat alone : white-breasted like a star .
Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard
skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny
hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's :
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow
brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all
my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere
he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-
white palm

Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of
speech

Came down upon my heart.

“My own Ænone,
Beautiful-brow'd Ænone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind
ingrav'n

‘For the most fair,’ would seem to award
it thine,

As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married
brows.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added “This was cast upon the
board,

When all the full-faced presence of the
Gods

Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom
’twere due :

But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the
cave

Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of
Gods.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnight : one silvery
cloud

Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower
they came,

Naked they came to that smooth-swarded
bower,

And at their feet the crocus brake like
fire,

Violet, amaranthus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies : and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and
vine,

This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs,
With bunch and berry and flower thro’
and thro’.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o’er him flow’d a golden cloud, and
lean’d

Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to
whom

Coming thro’ Heaven, like a light that
grows

Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion’d, overflowing revenue

Wherewith to embellish state, “from
many a vale

And river-sunder’d champaign clothed
with corn,

Or labour’d mine undrainable of ore.
Honour,” she said, “and homage, tax
and toll,

From many an inland town and haven
large,

Mast-throng’d beneath her shadowing
citadel

In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of
power,

“Which in all action is the end of all ;
Power fitted to the season ; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neigh-
bour crowns

Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon
from me,

From me, Heaven’s Queen, Paris, to thee
king-born,

A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men,
in power

Only, are likest gods, who have attain’d
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats

Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
 Out at arm’s-length, so much the thought
 of power
 Flatter’d his spirit ; but Pallas where she
 stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared
 limbs
 O’erthwarted with the brazen-headed
 spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest
 eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry
 cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made
 reply.

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-
 control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign
 power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall’d for) but to live by
 law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Again she said : “I woo thee not with
 gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbias’d by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to
 thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a
 God’s,
 To push thee forward thro’ a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew’d with action, and the full-grown
 will,
 Circled thro’ all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom.”

‘Here she ceas’d,
 And Paris ponder’d, and I cried, “O
 Paris,
 Give it to Pallas !” but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian
 wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her
 deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder : from the violets her light
 foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o’er her rounded
 form
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she
 moved.

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
 Half-whisper’d in his ear, “I promise
 thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in
 Greece,”
 She spoke and laugh’d : I shut my sight
 for fear :
 But when I look’d, Paris had raised his
 arm,
 And I beheld great Herë’s angry eyes,
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower ;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die.

‘Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Fairest—why fairest wife ? am I not fair ?
 My love hath told me so a thousand
 times.
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful
 tail
 Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most
 loving is she ?

Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my
arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips
prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling
dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest
pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the
craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the
dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while
I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Ænone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them over-
laid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trem-
bling stars.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the
glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with
her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak
my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and
men.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand
times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this
stone?

Seal’d it with kisses? water’d it with
tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my
face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my
weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating
cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and
more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the in-
most hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes!

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to
me
Walking the cold and starless road of
Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and
go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come
forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I
know
That, wheresoe’er I am by night and
day,
All earth and air seem only burning
fire.’

THE SISTERS.

WE were two daughters of one race :
She was the fairest in the face :

The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
They were together, and she fell ;
Therefore revenge became me well.
O the Earl was fair to see !

She died : she went to burning flame :
She mix'd her ancient blood with shame.

The wind is howling in turret and tree.
Whole weeks and months, and early and late,
To win his love I lay in wait :
O the Earl was fair to see !

I made a feast ; I bad him come ;
I won his love, I brought him home.
The wind is roaring in turret and tree.
And after supper, on a bed,
Upon my lap he laid his head :
O the Earl was fair to see !

I kiss'd his eyelids into rest :
His ruddy cheek upon my breast.
The wind is raging in turret and tree.
I hated him with the hate of hell,
But I loved his beauty passing well.
O the Earl was fair to see !

I rose up in the silent night :
I made my dagger sharp and bright.
The wind is raving in turret and tree.
As half-asleep his breath he drew,
Three times I stabb'd him thro' and thro'.
O the Earl was fair to see !

I curl'd and comb'd his comely head,
He look'd so grand when he was dead.
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
I wrapt his body in the sheet,
And laid him at his mother's feet.
O the Earl was fair to see !

TO —.

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

I SEND you here a sort of allegory,
(For you will understand it) of a soul,

A sinful soul possess'd of many gifts,
A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen
In all varieties of mould and mind)
And Knowledge for its beauty ; or if
Good,
Good only for its beauty, seeing not
That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are
three sisters
That doat upon each other, friends to
man,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears.
And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall
be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold
lie
Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
Was common clay ta'en from the common
earth
Moulded by God, and temper'd with the
tears
Of angels to the perfect shape of man.

THE PALACE OF ART.

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.'

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd
brass
I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or
shelf
The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And 'while the world runs round and
round,' I said,
'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his stedfast
shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring.'

To which my soul made answer readily :
 ' Trust me, in bliss I shall abide

In this great mansion, that is built for me,
 So royal-rich and wide.'

* * * *
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Four courts I made, East, West and
 South and North,

In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
 The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
 A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there
 ran a row

Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,
 Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
 Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
 That lent broad verge to distant lands,
 Far as the wild swan wings, to where the
 sky
 Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one
 swell

Across the mountain stream'd below
 In misty folds, that floating as they fell
 Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd
 To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
 A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd
 From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, ' And who shall
 gaze upon
 My palace with unblinded eyes,
 While this great bow will waver in the sun,
 And that sweet incense rise ?'

For that sweet incense rose and never
 fail'd,

And, while days sank or mounted higher,
 The light aerial gallery, golden-rail'd,
 Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd
 and traced,

Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
 From shadow'd grots of arches interlaced,
 And tipt with frost-like spires.

* * * *
 * * * *

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
 That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
 Thro' which the livelong day my soul
 did pass,
 Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace
 stood,
 All various, each a perfect whole
 From living Nature, fit for every mood
 And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green
 and blue,
 Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
 Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter
 blew
 His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of
 sand,
 And some one pacing there alone,
 Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
 Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry
 waves.
 You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
 And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing
 caves,
 Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
 By herds upon an endless plain,
 The ragged rims of thunder brooding
 low,
 With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
 In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
 Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
 And hoary to the wind.

And one a foreground black with stones
 and slags,
 Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
 All barr'd with long white cloud the
 scornful crags,
 And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd

On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there

Not less than truth design'd.

* * * *
* * * *

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise
A group of Houris bow'd to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian
king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one
hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, design'd.

* * * *
* * * *

Then in the towers I placed great bells
that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I
hung
The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and
mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd
his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and
stings;
Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or
bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man
declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod : and those great
bells

Began to chime. She took her throne :
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost Oriels' coloured
flame

Two godlike faces gazed below ;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion
were

Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd
fair

In diverse raiment strange :

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber,
emerald, blue,

Flush'd in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,
drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo'd
song
Throb thro' the ribbed stone ;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful
mirth,

Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible
earth,
Lord of the senses five ;

Communing with herself : ' All these are
mine,

And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me.' She—when young night
divine
Crown'd dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven ; and clapt her hands
and cried,

'I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height.

'O all things fair to sate my various eyes !
O shapes and hues that please me well !
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell !

'O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves
of swine
That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and
sleep ;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.'

Then of the moral instinct would she prate
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate ;
And at the last she said :

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.'

* * * *
* * * *

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn
mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prosper'd : so
three years

She prosper'd : on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his
ears,
Struck thro' with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she
turn'd her sight

The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was
born

Scorn of herself; again, from out that
mood

Laughter at her self-scorn.

'What! is not this my place of strength,'
she said,

'My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones
were laid

Since my first memory?'

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears
of blood,

And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of
flame,

And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she
came,

That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem'd my
soul,

'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of
sand,

Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from
the land

Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had
curl'd.

'No voice,' she shriek'd in that lone
hall,

'No voice breaks thro' the stillness of
this world:

One deep, deep silence all!'

She, mouldering with the dull earth's
mouldering sod,

Inwraught tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking
slow,

In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep
cry

Ot great wild beasts; then thinketh, 'I
have found

A new land, but I die.'

She howl'd aloud, 'I am on fire within.
There comes no murmur of reply.

What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?'

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.

'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,
'Where I may mourn and pray.

'Yet pull not down my palace towers,
that are
So lightly, beautifully built :
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.'

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
Of me you shall not win renown :
You thought to break a country heart
For pastime, ere you went to town.
At me you smiled, but unbeguiled
I saw the snare, and I retired :
The daughter of a hundred Earls,
You are not one to be desired.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
I know you proud to bear your name,
Your pride is yet no mate for mine,
Too proud to care from whence I came.
Nor would I break for your sweet sake
A heart that doats on truer charms.
A simple maiden in her flower
Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
Some meeker pupil you must find,
For were you queen of all that is,
I could not stoop to such a mind.
You sought to prove how I could love,
And my disdain is my reply.
The lion on your old stone gates
Is not more cold to you than I.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
You put strange memories in my head.
Not thrice your branching limes have
blown
Since I beheld young Laurence dead.
Oh your sweet eyes, your low replies :
A great enchantress you may be ;
But there was that across his throat
Which you had hardly cared to see.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
When thus he met his mother's view,
She had the passions of her kind,
She spake some certain truths of you.
Indeed I heard one bitter word
That scarce is fit for you to hear ;
Her manners had not that repose .
Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
There stands a spectre in your hall :
The guilt of blood is at your door :
You changed a wholesome heart to gall.
You held your course without remorse,
To make him trust his modest worth,
And, last, you fix'd a vacant stare,
And slew him with your noble birth.

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

I know you, Clara Vere de Vere,
You pine among your halls and towers :
The languid light of your proud eyes
Is wearied of the rolling hours.
In glowing health, with boundless wealth,
But sickening of a vague disease,
You know so ill to deal with time,
You needs must play such pranks as
these.

Clara, Clara Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands ?
Oh ! teach the orphan-boy to read,
Or teach the orphan-girl to sew,
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let the foolish yeoman go.

THE MAY QUEEN.

YOU must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear ;
 To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year ;
 Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest merriest day ;
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

There's many a black black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine ;
 There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline :
 But none so fair as little Alice in all the land they say,
 So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,
 If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break :
 But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and garlands gay,
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

As I came up the valley whom think ye should I see,
 But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree ?
 He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday,
 But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white,
 And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light.
 They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say,
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never be :
 They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is that to me ?
 There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer day,
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,
 And you'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the Queen ;
 For the shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from far away,
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy bowers,
 And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo-flowers ;
 And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray,
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass,
 And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass ;
 There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the livelong day,
 And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

All the valley, mother, 'ill be fresh and green and still,
 And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
 And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance and play,
 For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

So you must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear,
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year :
To-morrow 'ill be of all the year the maddest merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE.

If you're waking call me early, call me early, mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year.
It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,
Then you may lay me low i' the mould and think no more of me.

To-night I saw the sun set : he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind ;
And the New-year's coming up, mother, but I shall never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

Last May we made a crown of flowers : we had a merry day ;
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me Queen of May ;
And we danced about the may-pole and in the hazel copse,
Till Charles's Wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops.

There's not a flower on all the hills : the frost is on the pane :
I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again :
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high :
I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

The building rook 'll caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill shine,
Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world is still.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night ;
When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool.

You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,
And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid.
I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but you'll forgive me now ;
You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere I go ;

Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another child.

If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place ;
Tho' you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face ;
Tho' I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I'm far away.

Goodnight, goodnight, when I have said goodnight for evermore,
And you see me carried out from the threshold of the door ;
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green :
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

She'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor :
Let her take 'em : they are hers : I shall never garden more :
But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rosebush that I set
About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette.

Goodnight, sweet mother : call me before the day is born.
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn ;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year,
So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear.

CONCLUSION.

I THOUGHT to pass away before, and yet alive I am ;
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lamb.
How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the year !
To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's here.

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the skies,
And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that cannot rise,
And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow,
And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.

It seem'd so hard at first, mother, to leave the blessed sun,
And now it seems as hard to stay, and yet His will be done !
But still I think it can't be long before I find release ;
And that good man, the clergyman, has told me words of peace.

O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver hair !
And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet me there !
O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver head !
A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my bed.

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the sin.
Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in :
Nor would I now be well, mother, again if that could be,
For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for me.

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-watch beat,
There came a sweeter token when the night and morning meet :
But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in mine,
And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign.

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call ;
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all ;
The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
And in the wild March-morning I heard them call my soul.

For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie dear ;
I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here ;
With all my strength I pray'd for both, and so I felt resign'd,
And up the valley came a swell of music on the wind.

I thought that it was fancy, and I listen'd in my bed,
And then did something speak to me—I know not what was said ;
For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my mind,
And up the valley came again the music on the wind.

But you were sleeping ; and I said, 'It's not for them : it's mine.'
And if it come three times, I thought, I take it for a sign.
And once again it came, and close beside the window-bars,
Then seem'd to go right up to Heaven and die among the stars.

So now I think my time is near. I trust it is. I know
The blessed music went that way my soul will have to go.
And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day.
But, Effie, you must comfort *her* when I am past away.

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to fret ;
There's many a worthier than I, would make him happy yet.
If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been his wife ;
But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire of life.

O look ! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a glow ;
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I know.
And there I move no longer now, and there his light may shine—
Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine.

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done
The voice, that now is speaking, may be beyond the sun—
For ever and for ever with those just souls and true—
And what is life, that we should moan ? why make we such ado ?

For ever and for ever, all in a blessed home—
And there to wait a little while till you and Effie come—
To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

THE LOTOS-EATERS.

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward
the land,

'This mounting wave will roll us shore-
ward soon.'

In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did
swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary
dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the
moon ;

And like a downward smoke, the slender
stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall
did seem.

A land of streams ! some, like a down-
ward smoke,

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did
go ;

And some thro' wavering lights and
shadows broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward
flow

From the inner land : far off, three
mountain-tops,

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd : and, dew'd with
showery drops,

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the
woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West : thro' mountain clefts
the dale

Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding
vale

And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
A land where all things always seem'd
the same !

And round about the keel with faces
pale,

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters
came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted
stem,

Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they
gave

To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the
grave ;

And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart
did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow
sand,

Between the sun and moon upon the
shore ;

And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but ever-
more

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the
oar,

Weary the wandering fields of barren
foam.

Then some one said, ' We will return no
more ; '

And all at once they sang, ' Our island
home

Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer
roam.'

CHORIC SONG.

I.

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between
walls

Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes ;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from
the blissful skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers
weep,

And from the craggy ledge the poppy
hangs in sleep.

II.

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from
weariness?

All things have rest : why should we toil
alone,

We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy
balm ;

Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm !'
Why should we only toil, the roof and
crown of things ?

III.

Lo ! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no
toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life ; ah, why
Should life all labour be ?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last ?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. *What pleasure can we
have
To war with evil ? Is there any peace

In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?
All things have rest, and ripen toward
the grave

In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :
Give us long rest or death, dark death,
or dreamful ease.

V.

How sweet it were, hearing the down-
ward stream,

With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream !
To dream and dream, like yonder amber
light,

Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on
the height ;

To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the
beach,

And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melan-
choly ;

To muse and brood and live again in
memory,

With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an
urn of brass !

VI.

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears : but all hath
suffer'd change :

For surely now our household hearths are
cold :

Our sons inherit us : our looks are
strange :

And we should come like ghosts to trouble
joy.

Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel
sings

Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten
things.

Is there confusion in the little isle ?
Let what is broken so remain.

The Gods are hard to reconcile :
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There *is* confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the
 pilot-stars.

VII.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us,
 blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelid still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing
 slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined
 vine—
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water
 falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath
 divine !
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling
 brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out
 beneath the pine.

VIII.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
 All day the wind breathes low with
 mellow tone :
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the
 yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of
 motion we,
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard,
 when the surge was seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted
 his foam-fountains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with
 an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie
 reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless
 of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the
 bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the
 clouds are lightly curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with
 the gleaming world :
 Where they smile in secret, looking over
 wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,
 roaring deeps and fiery sands,
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and
 sinking ships, and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred
 in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient
 tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the
 words are strong ;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men
 that cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with
 enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and
 wine and oil ;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some,
 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian
 valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of
 asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet
 than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind
 and wave and oar ;
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will
 not wander more.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN.

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
 'The Legend of Good Women,' long ago
 Sung by the morning star of song, who
 made

His music heard below ;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose
 sweet breath

Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his
art
Held me above the subject, as strong
gales
Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho'
my heart,
Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In
every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient
song
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning
stars,
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and
wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars ;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging
hoofs ;
And I saw crowds in column'd sanctu-
aries ;
And forms that pass'd at windows and on
roofs
Of marble palaces ;

Corpses across the threshold ; heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall ;
Lances in ambush set ;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with
heated blasts
That run before the fluttering tongues
of fire ;
White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and
masts,
And ever climbing higher ;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen
plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers
woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron
grates,
And hush'd seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when
to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same
way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level
sand,
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove
to speak,
As when a great thought strikes along
the brain,
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town ;
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing
thought
Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and
did creep
Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd,
and brought
Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far
In an old wood : fresh-wash'd in coolest
dew

The maiden splendours of the morning star
Shook in the stedfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and
lean

Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with
clearest green,
New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey
done,
And with dead lips smiled at the twi-
light plain,
Half-fall'n across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
Not any song of bird or sound of rill ;
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine
 turn'd
 Their humid arms festooning tree to
 tree,
 And at the root thro' lush green grasses
 burn'd
 The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I
 knew
 The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
 On those long, rank, dark wood-walks
 drench'd in dew,
 Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
 Pour'd back into my empty soul and
 frame
 The times when I remember to have been
 Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
 Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unbliss-
 ful clime,
 'Pass freely thro' : the wood is all thine
 own,
 Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,
 Still than chisell'd marble, standing
 there ;
 A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
 And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with sur-
 prise
 Froze my swift speech : she turning on
 my face
 The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
 Spoke slowly in her place.

'I had great beauty : ask thou not my
 name :
 No one can be more wise than destiny.
 Many drew swords and died. Where'er
 I came
 I brought calamity.'

'No marvel, sovereign lady : in fair field
 Myself for such a face had boldly died,'
 I answer'd free ; and turning I appeal'd
 To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
 To her full height her stately stature
 draws ;

'My youth,' she said, 'was blasted with
 a curse :

This woman was the cause.

'I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
 Which men call'd Aulis in those iron
 years :

My father held his hand upon his face ;
 I, blinded with my tears,

'Still strove to speak : my voice was
 thick with sighs

As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
 The stern black-bearded kings with wolf-
 ish eyes,
 Waiting to see me die.

'The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat ;
 The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and
 the shore ;

The bright death quiver'd at the victim's
 throat ;
 Touch'd ; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow :
 'I would the white cold heavy-plung-
 ing foam,

Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep
 below,
 Then when I left my home.'

Her slow full words sank thro' the silence
 drear,

As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea :
 Sudden I heard a voice that cried, 'Come
 here,
 That I may look on thee.'

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
 One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd ;
 A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold
 black eyes,
 Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began :
 'I govern'd men by change, and so I
 sway'd

All moods. 'Tis long since I have seen
 a man.

Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.
I have no men to govern in this wood :
That makes my only woe.

'Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not
bend
One will ; nor tame and tutor with
mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee,
friend,
Where is Mark Antony?

'The man, my lover, with whom I rode
sublime
On Fortune's neck : we sat as God by
God :
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep,
and lit
Lamps which out-burn'd Canopus. O
my life
In Egypt ! O the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

'And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's
alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die !

'And there he died : and when I heard
my name
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook
my fear
Of the other : with a worm I balk'd his
fame.
What else was left ? look here !'

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish'd argent of her breast to
sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a
laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite.)

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier
found
Me lying dead, my crown about my
brows,

A name for ever !—lying robed and
crown'd,
Worthy a Roman spouse.'

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down
and glance
From tone to tone, and glided thro' all
change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for
delight ;
Because with sudden motion from the
ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with
light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest
darts ;
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty
hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming thro' the
lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and
soon,
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the
dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with
beams divine :
All night the splinter'd crags that wall
the dell
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine
laves
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the
door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied

To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow ;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure ; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth : ' Heaven heads the count of crimes
With that wild oath.' She render'd answer high :
' Not so, nor once alone ; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

' Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower ; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

' My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

' And I went mourning, " No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

' Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

' The light white cloud swam over us.
Anon

We heard the lion roaring from his den ;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

' Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

' When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire !

' It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will ;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

' Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.' Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips : she left me where I stood :

' Glory to God,' she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,
As one that from a casement leans his head,
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead.

' Alas ! alas !' a low voice, full of care,
Murmur'd beside me : ' Turn and look on me :
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

'Would I had been some maiden coarse
and poor !

O me, that I should ever see the light !
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.'

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and
trust :

To whom the Egyptian : 'O, you
tamely died !

You should have clung to Fulvia's waist,
and thrust

The dagger thro' her side.'

With that sharp sound the white dawn's
creeping beams,

Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my
dreams

Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden'd on the borders of the
dark,

Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her last
trance

Her murder'd father's head, or Joan of
Arc,

A light of ancient France ;

Or her who knew that Love can vanquish
Death,

Who kneeling, with one arm about
her king,

Drew forth the 'poison with her balmy
breath,

Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the
hidden ore

That glimpses, moving up, than I from
sleep

To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what
dull pain

Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to
strike

Into that wondrous track of dreams
again !

But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been
blest,

Desiring what is mingled with past
years,

In yearnings that can never be exprest
By signs or groans or tears ;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest
art,

Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

THE BLACKBIRD.

O BLACKBIRD ! sing me something well :
While all the neighbours shoot thee
round,

I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground,
Where thou may'st warble, eat and dwell.

The espaliers and the standards all
Are thine ; the range of lawn and
park :

The unnetted black-hearts ripen dark,
All thine, against the garden wall.

Yet, tho' I spared thee all the spring,
Thy sole delight is, sitting still,
With that gold dagger of thy bill
To fret the summer jenneting.

A golden bill ! the silver tongue,
Cold February loved, is dry :
Plenty corrupts the melody
That made thee famous once, when
young :

And in the sultry garden-squares,
Now thy flute-notes are changed to
coarse,

I hear thee not at all, or hoarse
As when a hawker hawks his wares.

Take warning ! he that will not sing
While yon sun prospers in the blue,
Shall sing for want, ere leaves are
new,

Caught in the frozen palms of Spring.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sigh-
ing :

Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.

Old year, you must not die ;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still : he doth not move :
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year, you must not go ;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim ;
A jollier year we shall not see.
But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,
And tho' his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die ;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I've half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er.
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold, my
friend,
And the New-year blithe and bold,
my friend,
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes ! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps : the light burns low :
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands, before you die.
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you
What is it we can do for you ?
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.

Alack ! our friend is gone.

Close up his eyes : tie up his chin :
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,

And waiteth at the door.

There's a new foot on the floor, my
friend,

And a new face at the door, my
friend,

A new face at the door.

TO J. S.

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold,
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow
In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are
nursed,

Fall into shadow, soonest lost :
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love. Something to love
He lends us ; but, when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.

This is the curse of time. Alas !

In grief I am not all unlearn'd ;
Once thro' mine own doors Death did
pass ;

One went, who never hath return'd.

He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is
seen

Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been.

Your loss is rarer ; for this star
 Rose with you thro' a little arc
 Of heaven, nor having wander'd far
 Shot on the sudden into dark.

I knew your brother : his mute dust
 I honour and his living worth :
 A man more pure and bold and just
 Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
 Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.
 Great Nature is more wise than I :
 I will not tell you not to weep.

And tho' mine own eyes fill with dew,
 Drawn from the spirit thro' the brain,
 I will not even preach to you,
 ' Weep, weeping dulls the inward
 pain.'

Let Grief be her own mistress still.
 She loveth her own anguish deep
 More than much pleasure. Let her will
 Be done—to weep or not to weep.

I will not say, ' God's ordinance
 Of Death is blown in every wind ;'
 For that is not a common chance
 That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone
 In all our hearts, as mournful light
 That broods above the fallen sun,
 And dwells in heaven half the night.

Vain solace ! Memory standing near
 Cast down her eyes, and in her
 throat

Her voice seem'd distant, and a tear
 Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,
 How *should* I soothe you anyway,
 Who miss the brother of your youth ?
 Yet something I did wish to say :

For he too was a friend to me :
 Both are my friends, and my true
 breast
 Bleedeth for both ; yet it may be
 That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would
 make
 Grief more. 'Twere better I should
 cease

Although myself could almost take
 The place of him that sleeps in
 peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace :
 Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
 While the stars burn, the moons increase,
 And the great ages onward roll.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.
 Nothing comes to thee new or strange.
 Sleep full of rest from head to feet ;
 Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

ON A MOURNER.

I.

NATURE, so far as in her lies,
 Imitates God, and turns her face
 To every land beneath the skies,
 Counts nothing that she meets with
 base,
 But lives and loves in every place ;

II.

Fills out the homely quickset-screens,
 And makes the purple lilac ripe,
 Steps from her airy hill, and greens
 The swamp, where humm'd the drop-
 ping snipe,
 With moss and braided marish-pipe ;

III.

And on thy heart a finger lays,
 Saying, ' Beat quicker, for the time
 Is pleasant, and the woods and ways
 Are pleasant, and the beech and lime
 Put forth and feel a gladder clime.'

IV.

And murmurs of a deeper voice,
 Going before to some far shrine,
 Teach that sick heart the stronger choice,
 Till all thy life one way incline
 With one wide Will that closes thine.

v.

And when the zoning eve has died
 Where yon dark valleys wind forlorn,
 Come Hope and Memory, spouse and
 bride,
 From out the borders of the morn,
 With that fair child betwixt them born.

vi.

And when no mortal motion jars
 The blackness round the tombing sod,
 Thro' silence and the trembling stars
 Comes Faith from tracts no feet have
 trod,
 And Virtue, like a household god

vii.

Promising empire ; such as those
 Once heard at dead of night to greet
 Troy's wandering prince, so that he rose
 With sacrifice, while all the fleet
 Had rest by stony hills of Crete.

You ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,
 Within this region I subsist,
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,
 And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
 That sober-suited Freedom chose,
 The land, where girt with friends or
 foes

A man may speak the thing he will ;

A land of settled government,
 A land of just and old renown,
 Where Freedom slowly broadens
 down

From precedent to precedent :

Where faction seldom gathers head,
 But by degrees to fullness wrought,
 The strength of some diffusive thought
 Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
 Opinion, and induce a time
 When single thought is civil crime,
 And individual freedom mute ;

Tho' Power should make from land to
 land

The name of Britain trebly great—
 Tho' every channel of the State
 Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
 Wild wind ! I seek a warmer sky,
 And I will see before I die
 The palms and temples of the South.

OF old sat Freedom on the heights,
 The thunders breaking at her feet :
 Above her shook the starry lights :
 She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
 Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
 But fragments of her mighty voice
 Came rolling on the wind.

Then step she down thro' town and field
 To mingle with the human race,
 And part by part to men reveal'd
 The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
 From her isle-altar gazing down,
 Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
 And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.
 The wisdom of a thousand years
 Is in them. May perpetual youth
 Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
 Make bright our days and light our
 dreams,

Turning to scorn with lips divine
 The falsehood of extremes !

LOVE thou thy land, with love far-brought
 From out the storied Past, and used
 Within the Present, but transfused
 Thro' future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for
day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds ;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years :
Cut Prejudice against the grain :
But gentle words are always gain :
Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise :
It grows to guerdon after-days :
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch :

Not clinging to some ancient saw ;
Not master'd by some modern term ;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :
And in its season bring the law ;

That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly,
binds—
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act ;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school ;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark ;
And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind ;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head ;
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood ;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like
Peace ;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,
 Would serve his kind in deed and word,
 Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
 That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
 From either side, nor veil his eyes :
 And if some dreadful need should rise
 Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
 As we bear blossom of the dead ;
 Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
 Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ENGLAND AND AMERICA IN 1782.

O THOU, that sendest out the man
 To rule by land and sea,
 Strong mother of a Lion-line,
 Be proud of those strong sons of thine
 Who wrench'd their rights from thee !

What wonder, if in noble heat
 Those men thine arms withstood,
 Retaught the lesson thou hadst taught,
 And in thy spirit with thee fought—
 Who sprang from English blood !

But Thou rejoice with liberal joy,
 Lift up thy rocky face,
 And shatter, when the storms are black,
 In many a streaming torrent back,
 The seas that shock thy base !

Whatever harmonies of law
 The growing world assume,
 Thy work is thine—The single note
 From that deep chord which Hampden
 smote
 Will vibrate to the doom.

THE GOOSE.

I KNEW an old wife lean and poor,
 Her rags scarce held together ;
 There strode a stranger to the door,
 And it was windy weather.

He held a goose upon his arm,
 He utter'd rhyme and reason,
 'Here, take the goose, and keep you
 warm,
 It is a stormy season.'

She caught the white goose by the leg,
 A goose—'twas no great matter.
 The goose let fall a golden egg
 With cackle and with clatter.

She dropt the goose, and caught the
 pelf,
 And ran to tell her neighbours ;
 And bless'd herself, and cursed herself,
 And rested from her labours.

And feeding high, and living soft,
 Grew plump and able-bodied ;
 Until the grave churchwarden doff'd,
 The parson smirk'd and nodded.

So sitting, served by man and maid,
 She felt her heart grow prouder :
 But ah ! the more the white goose laid
 It clack'd and cackled louder.

It clutter'd here, it chuckled there ;
 It stirr'd the old wife's mettle :
 She shifted in her elbow-chair,
 And hurl'd the pan and kettle.

'A quinsy choke thy cursed note !'
 Then wax'd her anger stronger.
 'Go, take the goose, and wring her throat,
 I will not bear it longer.'

Then yelp'd the cur, and yawl'd the cat ;
 Ran Gaffer, stumbled Gammer.
 The goose flew this way and flew that,
 And fill'd the house with clamour.

As head and heels upon the floor
 They flounder'd all together,
 There strode a stranger to the door,
 And it was windy weather :

He took the goose upon his arm,
 He utter'd words of scorning ;
 'So keep you cold, or keep you warm,
 It is a stormy morning.'

The wild wind rang from park and plain,
 And round the attics rumbled,
 Till all the tables danced again,
 And half the chimneys tumbled.

The glass blew in, the fire blew out,
 The blast was hard and harder.

Her cap blew off, her gown blew up,
 And a whirlwind clear'd the larder :

And while on all sides breaking loose
 Her household fled the danger,
 Quoth she, 'The Devil take the goose,
 And God forget the stranger!'

ENGLISH IDYLS

AND OTHER POEMS.

THE EPIC.

AT Francis Allen's on the Christmas-
 eve,—
 The game of forfeits done—the girls all
 kiss'd
 Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
 The parson Holmes, the poet Everard
 Hall,
 The host, and I sat round the wassail-
 bowl,
 Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held
 a talk,
 How all the old honour had from Christmas
 gone,
 Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd
 games
 In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired
 out
 With cutting eights that day upon the
 pond,
 Where, three times slipping from the
 outer edge,
 I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
 Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard
 The parson taking wide and wider
 sweeps,
 Now harping on the church-commis-
 sioners,
 Now hawking at Geology and schism ;
 Until I woke, and found him settled down
 Upon the general decay of faith
 Right thro' the world, 'at home was little
 left,

And none abroad : there was no anchor,
 none,
 To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt
 his hand
 On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by
 him.'
 'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-
 bowl.'
 'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift
 that way
 At college : but another which you had,
 I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
 What came of that?' 'You know,' said
 Frank, 'he burnt
 His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve
 books'—
 And then to me demanding why? 'Oh,
 sir,
 He thought that nothing new was said,
 or else
 Something so said 'twas nothing—that a
 truth
 Looks freshest in the fashiop of the day :
 God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.
 It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,'
 said Hall,
 'Why take the style of those heroic times?
 For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
 Nor we those times ; and why should any
 man
 Remodel models ? these twelve books of
 mine
 Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing
 worth,

Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.'
 'But I,'
 Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from
 this hearth
 And have it : keep a thing, its use will
 come.
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'
 He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a
 horse
 That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my
 ears ;
 For I remember'd Everard's college fame
 When we were Freshmen : then at my
 request
 He brought it ; and the poet little urged,
 But with some prelude of disparagement,
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and
 aes,
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
 King Arthur : then, because his wound
 was deep,
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was
 full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir
 Bedivere :
 'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
 Whereof this world holds record. Such
 a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think
 that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly
 deeds,
 Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
 I perish by this people which I made,—

Tho' Merlin sware that I should come
 again
 To rule once more—but let what will be,
 be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
 That without help I cannot last till morn.
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
 Which was my pride : for thou remem-
 berest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an
 arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
 derful,
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd
 across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a
 king :
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known :
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
 me word.'
 To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
 thus,
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
 word.'
 So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
 stept
 And in the moon athwart the place of
 tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
 men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind
 sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He,
 stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.
 There drew he forth the brand
 Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
 moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran
 forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the
hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he
stood,
This way and that dividing the swift
mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the
marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded
King.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere :
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast
heard ?'
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'
To whom replied King Arthur, faint
and pale :
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy féalty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word.'
Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in
thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,
'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,

Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men.
What good should follow this, if this were
done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to dis-
obey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The King is sick, and knows not what he
does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ? but were this
kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty
kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the
aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame
were lost.'
So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King.
Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily :
'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast
heard ?'
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'
To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath :
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what
thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,

In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldest betray me for the precious
hilt ;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence :

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the
sword,

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The
great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd
in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

And caught him by the hilt, and bran-
dish'd him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
thicker breath :

'Now see I by thine eyes that this is
done.

Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or
seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
gems

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
ing him ;

But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

That caught him by the hilt, and bran-
dish'd him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
ing hard :

'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I
were gone.

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
weight,

And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half
rose,

Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes

As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,

And would have spoken, but he found
not words,

Then took with care, and kneeling on
one knee,

O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
hands,

And rising bore him thro' the place of
tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
hard,

Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd
the King,

Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
'Quick, quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
ridge,

Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
he walk'd,

Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a
cry

Before. His own thought drove him, like
a goad.

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and
right

The bare black cliff clang'd round him,
 as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
 heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon.
 Then saw they how there hove a dusky
 barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them ; and descending they were
 ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately
 forms
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream
 —by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold—and
 from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice an agony
 Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one
 comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the
 world.
 Then murmur'd Arthur, ' Place me in
 the barge,'
 And to the barge they came. There those
 three Queens
 Put forth their hands, and took the King,
 and wept.
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and
 chafed his hands,
 And call'd him by his name, complaining
 loud,
 And dropping bitter tears against his brow
 Striped with dark blood : for all his face
 was white
 And colourless, and like the wither'd
 moon
 Smote by the fresh beam of the springing
 east ;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd
 with drops
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd
 with dust ;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that
 fringed his lips.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
 rest,

From spur to plume a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
 ' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I
 go ?

Where shall I hide my forehead and my
 eyes ?

For now I see the true old times are dead,
 When every morning brought a noble
 chance,

And every chance brought out a noble
 knight.

Such times have been not since the light
 that led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is
 dissolved

Which was an image of the mighty world ;
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the
 years,

Among new men, strange faces, other
 minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the
 barge :

' The old order changeth, yielding place
 to new,

And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the
 world.

Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I
 have done

May He within Himself make pure ! but
 thou,

If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are
 wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore,
 let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or
 goats

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer

Both for themselves and those who call
them friend?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.

But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy fair with orchard-
lawns

And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,

Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail

Moved from the brink, like some full-
breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood

With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir
Bedivere

Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge
of dawn,

And on the mere the wailing died away.

HERE ended Hall, and our last light,
that long

Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness,
flared and fell:

At which the Parson, sent to sleep with
sound,

And waked with silence, grunted 'Good!'
but we

Sat rapt: it was the tone with which he
read—

Perhaps some modern touches here and
there

Redeem'd it from the charge of nothing-
ness—

Or else we loved the man, and prized his
work;

I know not: but we sitting, as I said,
The cock crew loud; as at that time
of year

The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn:
Then Francis, muttering, like a mar-
ill-used,

'There now—that's nothing!' drew a
little back,

And drove his heel into the smoulder'd
log,

That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue:
And so to bed; where yet in sleep I seem'd
To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
Point after point; till on to dawn, when
dreams

Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,
To me, methought, who waited with a
crowd,

There came a bark that, blowing forward,
bore

King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port; and all the people
cried,

'Arthur is come again: he cannot die.'
Then those that stood upon the hills
behind

Repeated—'Come again, and thrice as
fair;'

And, further inland, voices echo'd—
'Come

With all good things, and war shall be
no more.'

At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard
indeed

The clear church-bells ring in the
Christmas-morn.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER;

OR, THE PICTURES.

THIS morning is the morning of the day,
When I and Eustace from the city went
To see the Gardener's Daughter; I and he,
Brothers in Art; a friendship so complete
Portion'd in halves between us, that we
grew

The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules ;
 So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.
 He, by some law that holds in love, and
 draws

The greater to the lesser, long desired
 A certain miracle of symmetry,
 A miniature of loveliness, all grace
 Summ'd up and closed in little ;—Juliet,
 she

So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she
 To me myself, for some three careless
 moons,

The summer pilot of an empty heart
 Unto the shores of nothing ! Know you not
 Such touches are but embassies of love,
 To tamper with the feelings, ere he found
 Empire for life ? but Eustace painted her,
 And said to me, she sitting with us then,
 ' When will *you* paint like this ? ' and I
 replied,

{ My words were half in earnest, half in
 jest,)

' 'Tis not your work, but Love's. Love,
 unperceived,

A more ideal Artist he than all,
 Came, drew your pencil from you, made
 those eyes

Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
 More black than ashbuds in the front of
 March. '

And Juliet answer'd laughing, ' Go and see
 The Gardener's daughter : trust me, after
 that,

You scarce can fail to match his master-
 piece. '

And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
 Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
 News from the humming city comes to it
 In sound of funeral or of marriage bells ;
 And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you
 hear

The windy clanging of the minster clock ;
 Although between it and the garden lies
 A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad
 stream,

That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,
 Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
 Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
 Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between
 Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-udder'd
 kine,

And all about the large lime feathers low,
 The lime a summer home of murmurous
 wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,
 Grew, seldom seen ; not less among us
 lived

Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not
 heard

Of Rose, the Gardener's daughter ? Where
 was he,

So blunt in memory, so old at heart,
 At such a distance from his youth in grief,
 That, having seen, forgot ? The common
 mouth,

So gross to express delight, in praise of
 her

Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,
 And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,
 Would play with flying forms and images,
 Yet this is also true, that, long before
 I look'd upon her, when I heard her name
 My heart was like a prophet to my heart,
 And told me I should love. A crowd of
 hopes,

That sought to sow themselves like
 winged seeds,

Born out of everything I heard and saw,
 Flutter'd about my senses and my soul ;
 And vague desires, like fitful blasts of
 balm

To one that travels quickly, made the air
 Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
 That verged upon them, sweeter than the
 dream

Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark
 East,

Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds
 For ever in itself the day we went
 To see her. All the land in flowery
 squares,

Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
 Smelt of the coming summer, as one large
 cloud

Drew downward : but all else of heaven
 was pure

Up to the Sun, and May from verge to
verge,
And May with me from head to heel.
And now,
As tho' 'twere yesterday, as tho' it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all
its sound,
(For those old Mays had thrice the life
of these,)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to
graze,
And, where the hedge-row cuts the
pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the
woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes
for joy,
But shook his song together as he near'd
His happy home, the ground. To left
and right,
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;
The redcap whistled ; and the nightingale
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.
And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said
to me,
'Hear how the bushes echo ! by my life,
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think
you they sing
Like poets, from the vanity of song ?
Or have they any sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for
what they have ?'
And I made answer, 'Were there nothing
else
For which to praise the heavens but only
love,
That only love were cause enough for
praise.'
Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read
my thought,
And on we went ; but ere an hour had
pass'd,
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the
North ;
Down which a well-worn pathway courted
us
To one green wicket in a privet hedge ;

This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned ;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume,
blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.
The garden stretches southward. In the
midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of
shade.
The garden-glasses glanced, and mom-
ently
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.
'Eustace,' I said, 'this wonder keeps
the house.'
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, 'Look ! look !' Before he ceased
I turn'd,
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.
For up the porch there grew an Eastern
rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale
had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm
aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the
shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side : the shadow of the
flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade—and still went waver-
ing down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have
danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipt,
And mix'd with shadows of the common
ground !
But the full day dwelt on her brows, and
sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her
lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a
breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half
shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man
young.

So rapt, we near'd the house ; but she,
 a Rose
 In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,
 Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance
 turn'd
 Into the world without ; till close at hand,
 And almost ere I knew mine own intent,
 This murmur broke the stillness of that
 air
 Which brooded round about her :
 ' Ah, one rose,
 One rose, but one, by those fair fingers
 cull'd,
 Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on
 lips
 Less exquisite than thine.'
 She look'd : but all
 Suffused with blushes—neither self-pos-
 sess'd
 Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and
 that,
 Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,
 And dropt the branch she held, and turn-
 ing, wound
 Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her
 lips
 For some sweet answer, tho' no answer
 came,
 Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,
 And moved away, and left me, statue-like,
 In act to render thanks.
 I, that whole day,
 Saw her no more, altho' I linger'd there
 Till every daisy slept, and Love's white
 star
 Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the
 dusk.
 So home we went, and all the livelong
 way
 With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.
 ' Now,' said he, ' will you climb the top
 of Art.
 You cannot fail but work in hues to dim
 The Titianic Flora. Will you match
 My Juliet? you, not you,—the Master,
 Love,
 A more ideal Artist he than all.'
 So home I went, but could not sleep
 for joy,
 Reading her perfect features in the gloom,

Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,
 And shaping faithful record of the glance
 That graced the giving—such a noise of
 life
 Swarm'd in the golden present, such a
 voice
 Call'd to me from the years to come, and
 such
 A length of bright horizon rimm'd the
 dark.
 And all that night I heard the watchman
 peal
 The sliding season : all that night I heard
 The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy
 hours.
 The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,
 O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,
 Distilling odours on me as they went
 To greet their fairer sisters of the East.
 Love at first sight, first-born, and heir
 to all,
 Made this night thus. Henceforward
 squall nor storm
 Could keep me from that Eden where she
 dwelt.
 Light pretexts drew me ; sometimes a
 Dutch love
 For tulips ; then for roses, moss or musk,
 To grace my city rooms ; or fruits and
 cream
 Served in the weeping elm ; and more and
 more
 A word could bring the colour to my
 cheek ;
 A thought would fill my eyes with happy
 dew ;
 Love trebled life within me, and with
 each
 The year increased.
 The daughters of the year,
 One after one, thro' that still garden
 pass'd ;
 Each garlanded with her peculiar flower
 Danced into light, and died into the
 shade ;
 And each in passing touch'd with some
 new grace
 Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by
 day,
 Like one that never can be wholly known,

Her beauty grew ; till Autumn brought
 an hour
 For Eustace, when I heard his deep 'I
 will,'
 Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to
 hold
 From thence thro' all the worlds : but I
 rose up
 Full of his bliss, and following her dark
 eyes
 Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd
 The wicket-gate, and found her standing
 there.

There sat we down upon a garden
 mound,
 Two mutually enfolded ; Love, the third,
 Between us, in the circle of his arms
 Enwound us both ; and over many a range
 Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,
 Across a hazy glimmer of the west,
 Reveal'd their shining windows : from
 them clash'd
 The bells ; we listen'd ; with the time
 we play'd,
 We spoke of other things ; we coursed
 about
 The subject most at heart, more near and
 near,
 Like doves about a dove-cote, wheeling
 round
 The central wish, until we settled there.

Then, in that time and place, I spoke
 to her,
 Requiring, tho' I knew it was mine own,
 Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,
 Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,
 A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved ;
 And in that time and place she answer'd
 me,
 And in the compass of three little words,
 More musical than ever came in one,
 The silver fragments of a broken voice,
 Made me most happy, faltering, 'I am
 thine.'

Shall I cease here ? Is this enough to
 say
 That my desire, like all strongest hopes,
 By its own energy fulfill'd itself,
 Merged in completion ? Would you learn
 at full

How passion rose thro' circumstantial
 grades

Beyond all grades develop'd ? and indeed
 I had not staid so long to tell you all,
 But while I mused came Memory with
 sad eyes,

Holding the folded annals of my youth ;
 And while I mused, Love with knit brows
 went by,

And with a flying finger swept my lips,
 And spake, 'Be wise : not easily forgiven
 Are those, who setting wide the doors that
 bar

The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
 Let in the day.' Here, then, my words
 have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of fare-
 wells—

Of that which came between, more sweet
 than each,

In whispers, like the whispers of the
 leaves

That tremble round a nightingale—in
 sighs

Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utter-
 ance,

Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I
 not tell

Of difference, reconciliation, pledges
 given,

And vows, where there was never need
 of vows,

And kisses, where the heart on one wild
 leap

Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above
 The heavens between their fairy fleeces

pale
 Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting
 stars ;

Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,
 Spread the light haze along the river-

shores,
 And in the hollows ; or as once we met
 Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering

rain
 Night slid down one long stream of sigh-

ing wind,
 And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.

But this whole hour your eyes have
 been intent

On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it holds

May not be dwelt on by the common day.
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul ;

Make thine heart ready with thine eyes :
the time

Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love ; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas !
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

DORA.

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,

And often thought, 'I'll make them man
and wife.'

Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd toward William ; but the youth, because

He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said,
'My son :

I married late, but I would wish to see
My grandchild on my knees before I die :
And I have set my heart upon a match.
Now therefore look to Dora ; she is well
To look to ; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter : he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and
he died

In foreign lands ; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora : take her for your
wife ;

For I have wish'd this marriage, night
and day,

For many years.' But William answer'd
short ;

'I cannot marry Dora ; by my life,
I will not marry Dora.' Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands,
and said :

'You will not, boy ! you dare to answer
thus !

But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to
it ;

Consider, William : take a month to
think,

And let me have an answer to my wish ;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall
pack,

And never more darken my doors again.'
But William answer'd madly ; bit his
lips,

And broke away. The more he look'd
at her

The less he liked her ; and his ways were
harsh ;

But Dora bore them meekly. Then
before

The month was out he left his father's
house,

And hired himself to work within the
fields ;

And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and
wed

A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing,
Allan call'd

His niece and said : 'My girl, I love you
well ;

But if you speak with him that was my
son,

Or change a word with her he calls his
wife,

My home is none of yours. My will is
law.'

And Dora promised, being meek. She
thought,

'It cannot be : my uncle's mind will
change !'

And days went on, and there was born
a boy

To William ; then distresses came on
him ;

And day by day he pass'd his father's
gate,

Heart-broken, and his father help'd him
not.

But Dora stored what little she could
save,

And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know

Who sent it ; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought

Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said :

' I have obey'd my uncle until now,
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,

And for your sake, the woman that he chose,

And for this orphan, I am come to you :
You know there has not been for these five years

So full a harvest : let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat ; that when his heart is glad

Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone.'

And Dora took the child, and went her way

Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.

Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not ; for none of all his men

Dare tell him Dora waited with the child ;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,

But her heart fail'd her ; and the reapers reap'd,

And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took

The child once more, and sat upon the mound ;

And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,

And came and said : ' Where were you yesterday ?

Whose child is that ? What are you doing here ?'

So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, ' This is William's child !'

' And did I not,' said Allan, ' did I not
Forbid you, Dora ?' Dora said again :
' Do with me as you will, but take the child,

And bless him for the sake of him that's gone !'

And Allan said, ' I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you !
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared

To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy ;

But go you hence, and never see me more.'

So saying, he took the boy that cried aloud

And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell

At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,

And the boy's cry came to her from the field,

More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down

And wept in secret ; and the reapers reap'd,

And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood

Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise

To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, ' My uncle took the boy ;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you :
He says that he will never see me more.'
Then answer'd Mary, ' This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself :

And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
 For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
 His mother ; therefore thou and I will go,
 And I will have my boy, and bring him home ;
 And I will beg of him to take thee back :
 But if he will not take thee back again,
 Then thou and I will live within one house,
 And work for William's child, until he grows
 Of age to help us.'

So the women kiss'd

Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
 The door was off the latch : they peep'd,
 and saw
 The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
 Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
 And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,
 Like one that loved him : and the lad stretch'd out
 And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
 From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
 Then they came in : but when the boy beheld
 His mother, he cried out to come to her :
 And Allan set him down, and Mary said :
 ' O Father !—if you let me call you so—
 I never came a-begging for myself,
 Or William, or this child ; but now I come
 For Dora : take her back ; she loves you well.
 O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
 With all men ; for I ask'd him, and he said,
 He could not ever rue his marrying me—
 I had been a patient wife : but, Sir, he said
 That he was wrong to cross his father thus :

" God bless him !" he said, " and may he never know "
 The troubles I have gone thro' !" Then he turn'd
 His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am !
 But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you
 Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
 His father's memory ; and take Dora back,
 And let all this be as it was before.'

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
 By Mary. There was silence in the room ;
 And all at once the old man burst in sobs :—

' I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd my son.
 I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear son.
 May God forgive me !—I have been to blame.
 Kiss me, my children.'

Then they clung about
 The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many times.
 And all the man was broken with remorse ;
 And all his love came back a hundred-fold ;
 And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's child
 Thinking of William.

So those four abode
 Within one house together ; and as years
 Went forward, Mary took another mate ;
 But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

AUDLEY COURT.

' THE Bull, the Fleece are cramm'd, and not a room
 For love or money. Let us picnic there
 At Audley Court.'

I spoke, while Audley feast
 Humm'd like a hive all round the narrow quay,
 To Francis, with a basket on his arm,
 To Francis just alighted from the boat,

And breathing of the sea. 'With all my heart,'
 Said Francis. Then we shoulder'd thro'
 the swarm,
 And rounded by the stillness of the beach
 To where the bay runs up its latest horn.
 We left the dying ebb that faintly lipp'd
 The flat red granite; so by many a sweep
 Of meadow smooth from aftermath we
 reach'd
 The griffin-guarded gates, and pass'd thro'
 all
 The pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores,
 And cross'd the garden to the gardener's
 lodge,
 With all its casements bedded, and its
 walls
 And chimneys muffled in the leafy vine.
 There, on a slope of orchard, Francis
 laid
 A damask napkin wrought with horse and
 hound,
 Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of
 home,
 And, half-cut-down, a pasty costly-made,
 Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret
 lay,
 Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
 Imbedded and injellied; last, with these,
 A flask of cider from his father's vats,
 Prime, which I knew; and so we sat and
 eat
 And talk'd old matters over; who was
 dead,
 Who married, who was like to be, and
 how
 The races went, and who would rent the
 hall:
 Then touch'd upon the game, how scarce
 it was
 This season; glancing thence, discuss'd
 the farm,
 The four-field system, and the price of
 grain;
 And struck upon the corn-laws, where we
 split,
 And came again together on the king
 With heated faces; till he laugh'd aloud;
 And, while the blackbird on the pippin
 hung

To hear him, clapt his hand in mine and
 sang—
 'Oh! who would fight and march and
 countermarch,
 Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field,
 And shovell'd up into some bloody trench
 Where no one knows? but let me live my
 life.
 'Oh! who would cast and balance at
 a desk,
 Perch'd like a crow upon a three-legg'd
 stool,
 Till all his juice is dried, and all his joints
 Are full of chalk? but let me live my life.
 'Who'd serve the state? for if I carved
 my name
 Upon the cliffs that guard my native land,
 I might as well have traced it in the sands;
 The sea wastes all: but let me live my life.
 'Oh! who would love? I woo'd a
 woman once,
 But she was sharper than an eastern wind,
 And all my heart turn'd from her, as a
 thorn
 Turns from the sea; but let me live my
 life.'
 He sang his song, and I replied with
 mine:
 I found it in a volume, all of songs,
 Knock'd down to me, when old Sir
 Robert's pride,
 His books—the more the pity, so I said—
 Came to the hammer here in March—
 and this—
 I set the words, and added names I knew.
 'Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep, and dream
 of me:
 Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister's arm,
 And sleeping, haply dream her arm is
 mine.
 'Sleep, Ellen, folded in Emilia's arm;
 Emilia, fairer than all else but thou,
 For thou art fairer than all else that is.
 'Sleep, breathing health and peace
 upon her breast:
 Sleep, breathing love and trust against
 her lip:
 I go to-night: I come to-morrow morn.
 'I go, but I return: I would I were
 The pilot of the darkness and the dream.

Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, love, and dream of me.'

So sang we each to either, Francis Hale,

The farmer's son, who lived across the bay,

My friend; and I, that having where-withal,

And in the fallow leisure of my life

A rolling stone of here and everywhere,

Did what I would; but ere the night we rose

And saunter'd home beneath a moon, that, just

In crescent, dimly rain'd about the leaf

Twilights of airy silver, till we reach'd

The limit of the hills; and as we sank

From rock to rock upon the glooming quay,

The town was hush'd beneath us: lower down

The bay was oily calm; the harbour-buoy,

Sole star of phosphorescence in the calm,

With one green sparkle ever and anon

Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.

WALKING TO THE MAIL.

John. I'M glad I walk'd. How fresh the meadows look

Above the river, and, but a month ago,

The whole hill-side was redder than a fox.

Is yon plantation where this byway joins

The turnpike?

James. Yes.

John. And when does this come by?

James. The mail? At one o'clock.

John. What is it now?

James. A quarter to.

John. Whose house is that I see?

No, not the County Member's with the vane:

Up higher with the yew-tree by it, and half

A score of gables.

James. That? Sir Edward Head's: But he's abroad: the place is to be sold.

John. Oh, his. He was not broken.

James.

No, sir, he,

Vex'd with a morbid devil in his blood

That veil'd the world with jaundice, hid his face

From all men, and commercing with himself,

He lost the sense that handles daily life—

That keeps us all in order more or less—

And sick of home went overseas for change.

John. And whither?

James. Nay, who knows? he's here and there.

But let him go; his devil goes with him,

As well as with his tenant, Jocky Dawes.

John. What's that?

James. You saw the man—on Monday, was it?—

There by the humpback'd willow; half stands up

And bristles; half has fall'n and made a bridge;

And there he caught the younker tickling trout—

Caught *in flagrante*—what's the Latin word?—

Delicto: but his house, for so they say, Was haunted with a jolly ghost, that shook

The curtains, whined in lobbies, tapt at doors,

And rummaged like a rat: no servant stay'd:

The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,

And all his household stuff; and with his boy

Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,

Sets out, and meets a friend who hails him, 'What!

You're flitting!' 'Yes, we're flitting,' says the ghost

(For they had pack'd the thing among the beds,)

'Oh well,' says he, 'you flitting with us too—

Jack, turn the horses' heads and home again.'

John. He left his wife behind; for so I heard.

James. He left her, yes. I met my lady once :

A woman like a butt, and harsh as crabs.

John. Oh yet but I remember, ten years back—

'Tis now at least ten years—and then she was—

You could not light upon a sweeter thing :
A body slight and round, and like a pear
In growing, modest eyes, a hand, a foot
Lessening in perfect cadence, and a skin
As clean and white as privet when it flowers.

James. Ay, ay, the blossom fades, and they that loved

At first like dove and dove were cat and dog.

She was the daughter of a cottager,
Out of her sphere. What betwixt shame and pride,

New things and old, himself and her, she sour'd

To what she is : a nature never kind !

Like men, like manners : like breeds like, they say :

Kind nature is the best : those manners next

That fit us like a nature second-hand ;

Which are indeed the manners of the great.

John. But I had heard it was this bill that past,

And fear of change at home, that drove him hence.

James. That was the last drop in the cup of gall.

I once was near him, when his bailiff brought

A Chartist pike. You should have seen him wince

As from a venomous thing : he thought himself

A mark for all, and shudder'd, lest a cry
Should break his sleep by night, and his nice eyes

Should see the raw mechanic's bloody thumbs

Sweat on his blazon'd chairs ; but, sir, you know

That these two parties still divide the world—

Of those that want, and those that have :
and still

The same old sore breaks out from age to age

With much the same result. Now I myself,

A Tory to the quick, was as a boy
Destructive, when I had not what I would.

I was at school—a college in the South :
There lived a flayflint near ; we stole his fruit,

His hens, his eggs ; but there was law for us ;

We paid in person. He had a sow, sir. She,

With meditative grunts of much content,
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.

By night we dragg'd her to the college tower

From her warm bed, and up the corkscrew stair

With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,

And on the leads we kept her till she pigg'd.

Large range of prospect had the mother sow,

And but for daily loss of one she loved

As one by one we took them—but for this—

As never sow was higher in this world—
Might have been happy : but what lot is pure ?

We took them all, till she was left alone
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,

And so return'd unfarrow'd to her sty.

John. They found you out ?

James. Not they.

John. Well—after all—

What know we of the secret of a man ?

His nerves were wrong. What ails us,
who are sound,

That we should mimic this raw fool the world,

Which charts us all in its coarse blacks
or whites,

As ruthless as a baby with a worm,

As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows

To Pity—more from ignorance than will.

But put your best foot forward, or I
 fear
 That we shall miss the mail : and here it
 comes
 With five at top : as quaint a four-in-hand
 As you shall see—three pyebalds and a
 roan.

EDWIN MORRIS ;

OR, THE LAKE.

O ME, my pleasant rambles by the lake,
 My sweet, wild, fresh three quarters of a
 year,

My one Oasis in the dust and drouth
 Of city life ! I was a sketcher then :
 See here, my doing : curves of mountain,
 bridge,

Boat, island, ruins of a castle, built
 When men knew how to build, upon a
 rock

With turrets lichen-gilded like a rock :
 And here, new-comers in an ancient hold,
 New-comers from the Mersey, million-
 aires,

Here lived the Hills—a Tudor-chimnied
 bulk

Of mellow brickwork on an isle of bowers.

O me, my pleasant rambles by the lake
 With Edwin Morris and with Edward
 Bull

The curate ; he was fatter than his cure.

But Edwin Morris, he that knew the
 names,
 Long learned names of agaric, moss and
 fern,

Who forged a thousand theories of the
 rocks,

Who taught me how to skate, to row, to
 swim,

Who read me rhymes elaborately good,
 His own—I call'd him Crichton, for he
 seem'd

All-perfect, finish'd to the finger nail.

And once I ask'd him of his early life,
 And his first passion ; and he answer'd
 me ;

And well his words became him : was he
 not

A full-cell'd honeycomb of eloquence
 Stored from all flowers ? Poet-like he
 spoke.

' My love for Nature is as old as I ;
 But thirty moons, one honeymoon to that,
 And three rich sennights more, my love
 for her.

My love for Nature and my love for her,
 Of different ages, like twin-sisters grew,
 Twin-sisters differently beautiful.
 To some full music rose and sank the sun,
 And some full music seem'd to move and
 change

With all the varied changes of the dark,
 And either twilight and the day between ;
 For daily hope fulfill'd, to rise again
 Revolving toward fulfilment, made it
 sweet

To walk, to sit, to sleep, to wake, to
 breathe.'

Or this or something like to this he
 spoke.

Then said the fat-faced curate Edward
 Bull,

' I take it, God made the woman for
 the man,

And for the good and increase of the
 world.

A pretty face is well, and this is well,
 To have a dame indoors, that trims us up,
 And keeps us tight ; but these unreal
 ways

Seem but the theme of writers, and in-
 deed

Worn threadbare. Man is made of solid
 stuff.

I say, God made the woman for the man,
 And for the good and increase of the
 world.'

' Parson,' said I, 'you pitch the pipe
 too low :

But I have sudden touches, and can run
 My faith beyond my practice into his :
 Tho' if, in dancing after Letty Hill,
 I do not hear the bells upon my cap,
 I scarce have other music : yet say on.

What should one give to light on such a dream?'

I ask'd him half-sardonically.

'Give?

Give all thou art,' he answer'd, and a light

Of laughter dimpled in his swarthy cheek;
'I would have hid her needle in my heart,

To save her little finger from a scratch
No deeper than the skin: my ears could hear

Her lightest breath; her least remark
was worth

The experience of the wise. I went and came;

Her voice fled always thro' the summer land;

I spoke her name alone. Thrice-happy days!

The flower of each, those moments when we met,

The crown of all, we met to part no more.'

Were not his words delicious, I a beast
To take them as I did? but something jar'd;

Whether he spoke too largely; that there seem'd

A touch of something false, some self-conceit,

Or over-smoothness: howsoe'er it was,
He scarcely hit my humour, and I said:

'Friend Edwin, do not think yourself alone

Of all men happy. Shall not Love to me,

As in the Latin song I learnt at school,
Sneeze out a full God-bless-you right and left?

But you can talk: yours is a kindly vein:
I have, I think,—Heaven knows—as much within;

Have, or should have, but for a thought or two,

That like a purple beech among the greens
Looks out of place: 'tis from no want in her:

It is my shyness, or my self-distrust,
Or something of a wayward modern mind
Dissecting passion. Time will set me right.'

So spoke I knowing not the things that were.

Then said the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull:

'God made the woman for the use of man,

And for the good and increase of the world.'

And I and Edwin laughed; and now we paused

About the windings of the marge to hear
The soft wind blowing over meadowy holms

And alders, garden-isles; and now we left
The clerk behind us, I and he, and ran
By ripply shallows of the lispings lake,
Delighted with the freshness and the sound.

But, when the bracken rusted on their crags,

My suit had wither'd, nipt to death by him

That was a God, and is a lawyer's clerk,
The rentroll Cupid of our rainy isles.

'Tis true, we met; one hour I had, no more:

She sent a note, the seal an *Elle vous suit*,
The close, 'Your Letty, only yours;' and this

Thrice underscored. The friendly mist of morn

Clung to the lake. I boated over, ran
My craft aground, and heard with beating heart

The Sweet-Gale rustle round the shelving keel;

And out I stept, and up I crept: she moved,

Like Proserpine in Enna, gathering flowers:

Then low and sweet I whistled thrice; and she,

She turn'd, we closed, we kiss'd, swore faith, I breathed

In some new planet: a silent cousin stole
Upon us and departed: 'Leave,' she
cried,

'O leave me!' 'Never, dearest, never:
here

I brave the worst:' and while we stood
like fools

Embracing, all at once a score of pugs
And poodles yell'd within, and out they
came

Trustees and Aunts and Uncles. 'What,
with him!

Go' (shrill'd the cotton-spinning chorus);
'him!'

I choked. Again they shriek'd the
burthen—'Him!'

Again with hands of wild rejection 'Go!—
Girl, get you in!' She went—and in one
month

They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,
To lands in Kent and messuages in York,
And slight Sir Robert with his watery
smile

And educated whisker. But for me,
They set an ancient creditor to work:
It seems I broke a close with force and
arms:

There came a mystic token from the king
To greet the sheriff, needless courtesy!
I read, and fled by night, and flying
turn'd:

Her taper glimmer'd in the lake below:
I turn'd once more, close-button'd to the
storm;

So left the place, left Edwin, nor have seen
Him since, nor heard of her, nor cared to
hear.

Nor cared to hear? perhaps: yet long
ago

I have pardon'd little Letty; nor indeed,
It may be, for her own dear sake but this,
She seems a part of those fresh days to me;
For in the dust and drouth of London life
She moves among my visions of the lake,
While the prime swallow dips his wing,
or then

While the gold-lily blows, and overhead
The light cloud smoulders on the summer
crag.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES.

ALTHO' I be the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust
of sin,

Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce
meet

For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn and
sob,

Battering the gates of heaven with storms
of prayer,

Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.
Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty
God,

This not be all in vain, that thrice ten
years,

Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes
and cramps,

A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and
sleet, and snow;

And I had hoped that ere this period closed
Thou wouldest have caught me up into thy
rest,

Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and
the palm.

O take the meaning, Lord: I do not
breathe,

Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.
Pain heap'd ten-hundred-fold to this, were
still

Less burthen, by ten-hundred-fold, to bear,
Than were those lead-like tons of sin,
that crush'd

My spirit flat before thee.

O Lord, Lord,

Thou knowest I bore this better at the
first,

For I was strong and hale of body then;
And tho' my teeth, which now are dropt
away,

Would chatter with the cold, and all my
beard

Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon,
I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with
sound

Of pious hymns and psalms, and some-
times saw

An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.
Now am I feeble grown ; my end draws
nigh ;

I hope my end draws nigh : half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognise the fields I
know ;

And both my thighs are rotted with the
dew ;

Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,
While my stiff spine can hold my weary
head,

Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the
stone,

Have mercy, mercy : take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved ? who is it may be
saved ?

Who may be made a saint, if I fail here ?
Show me the man hath suffer'd more
than I.

For did not all thy martyrs die one death ?
For either they were stoned, or crucified,
Or burn'd in fire, or boil'd in oil, or sawn
In twain beneath the ribs ; but I die here
To-day, and whole years long, a life of
death.

Bear witness, if I could have found a way
(And heedfully I sifted all my thought)
More slowly-painful to subdue this home
Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,
I had not stinted practice, O my God.

For not alone this pillar-punishment,
Not this alone I bore : but while I lived
In the white convent down the valley there,
For many weeks about my loins I wore
The rope that haled the buckets from the
well,

Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose ;
And spake not of it to a single soul,
Until the ulcer, eating thro' my skin,
Betray'd my secret penance, so that all
My brethren marvell'd greatly. More
than this

I bore, whereof, O God, thou knowest all.
Three winters, that my soul might
grow to thee,

I lived up there on yonder mountain
side.

My right leg chain'd into the crag, I lay
Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones ;
Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist,
and twice

Black'd with thy branding thunder, and
sometimes

Sucking the damps for drink, and eating
not,

Except the spare chance-gift of those
that came

To touch my body and be heal'd, and live:
And they say then that I work'd miracles,
Whereof my fame is loud amongst man-
kind,

Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou,
O God,

Knowest alone whether this was or no.

Have mercy, mercy ! cover all my sin.

Then, that I might be more alone
with thee,

Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
Six cubits, and three years on one of
twelve ;

And twice three years I crouch'd on one
that rose

Twenty by measure ; last of all, I grew
Twice ten long weary weary years to this,
That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as
this—

Or else I dream—and for so long a time,
If I may measure time by yon slow light,
And this high dial, which my sorrow
crowns—

So much—even so.

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
' Fall down, O Simeon : thou hast suffer'd
long

For ages and for ages !' then they prate
Of penances I cannot have gone thro',
Perplexing me with lies ; and oft I fall,
Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies
That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are
choked.

But yet

Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all
the saints

Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on
earth

House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat whole-
some food,

And wear warm clothes, and even beasts
have stalls,

I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the
light,

Bow down one thousand and two hundred
times,

To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the
saints ;

Or in the night, after a little sleep,

I wake : the chill stars sparkle ; I am
wet

With drenching dews, or stiff with crack-
ling frost.

I wear an undress'd goatskin on my
back ;

A grazing iron collar grinds my neck ;

And in my weak, lean arms I lift the
cross,

And strive and wrestle with thee till I
die :

O mercy, mercy ! wash away my sin.

O Lord, thou knowest what a man I
am ;

A sinful man, conceived and born in sin :
'Tis their own doing ; this is none of
mine ;

Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for
this,

That here come those that worship me ?
Ha ! ha !

They think that I am somewhat. What
am I ?

The silly people take me for a saint,
And bring me offerings of fruit and
flowers :

And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness
here)

Have all in all endured as much, and
more

Than many just and holy men, whose
names

Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
What is it I can have done to merit this ?
I am a sinner viler than you all.

It may be I have wrought some miracles,
And cured some halt and maim'd ; but
what of that ?

It may be, no one, even among the saints,
May match his pains with mine ; but
what of that ?

Yet do not rise ; for you may look on me,
And in your looking you may kneel to
God.

Speak ! is there any of you halt or maim'd ?
I think you know I have some power
with Heaven

From my long penance : let him speak
his wish.

Yes, I can heal him. Power goes
forth from me.

They say that they are heal'd. Ah,
hark ! they shout

'St. Simeon Stylites.' Why, if so,
God reaps a harvest in me. O my soul,
God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,
Can I work miracles and not be saved ?
This is not told of any. They were saints.
It cannot be but that I shall be saved ;
Yea, crown'd a saint. They shout,
'Behold a saint !'

And lower voices saint me from above.
Courage, St. Simeon ! This dull chrysalis
Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere
death

Spreads more and more and more, that
God hath now

Sponged and made blank of crimeful
record all

My mortal archives.

O my sons, my sons,
I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname
Stylites, among men ; I, Simeon,
The watcher on the column till the end ;
I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine
bakes ;

I, whose bald brows in silent hours
become

Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now
From my high nest of penance here pro-
claim

That Pontius and Iscariot by my side

Show'd like fair seraphs. On the coals
 I lay,
 A vessel full of sin : all hell beneath
 Made me boil over. Devils pluck'd my
 sleeve,
 Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.
 I smote them with the cross ; they
 swarm'd again.
 In bed like monstrous apes they crush'd
 my chest :
 They flapp'd my light out as I read : I
 saw
 Their faces grow between me and my
 book ;
 With colt-like whinny and with hoggish
 whine
 They burst my prayer. Yet this way
 was left,
 And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify
 Your flesh, like me, with scourges and
 with thorns ;
 Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may
 be, fast
 Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with
 slow steps,
 With slow, faint steps, and much exceed-
 ing pain,
 Have scrambled past those pits of fire,
 that still
 Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the
 praise :
 God only thro' his bounty hath thought
 fit,
 Among the powers and princes of this
 world,
 To make me an example to mankind,
 Which few can reach to. Yet I do not
 say
 But that a time may come—yea, even
 now,
 Now, now, his footsteps smite the thresh-
 old stairs
 Of life—I say, that time is at the doors
 When you may worship me without re-
 proach ;
 For I will leave my relics in your land,
 And you may carve a shrine about my
 dust,
 And burn a fragrant lamp before my
 bones,

When I am gather'd to the glorious
 saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewd-
 est pain
 Ran shrivelling thro' me, and a cloudlike
 change,
 In passing, with a grosser film made thick
 These heavy, horny eyes. The end ! the
 end !

Surely the end ! What's here ? a shape,
 a shade,

A flash of light. Is that the angel there
 That holds a crown ? Come, blessed
 brother, come.

I know thy glittering face. I waited
 long ;

My brows are ready. What ! deny it
 now ?

Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I
 clutch it. Christ !

'Tis gone : 'tis here again ; the crown !
 the crown !

So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,
 And from it melt the dews of Paradise,
 Sweet ! sweet ! spikenard, and balm, and
 frankincense.

Ah ! let me not be fool'd, sweet saints :
 I trust

That I am whole, and clean, and meet
 for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of
 God,

Among you there, and let him presently
 Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft,
 And climbing up into my airy home,
 Deliver me the blessed sacrament ;
 For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,
 I prophesy that I shall die to-night,
 A quarter before twelve.

But thou, O Lord,
 Aid all this foolish people ; let them take
 Example, pattern : lead them to thy light.

THE TALKING OAK.

ONCE more the gate behind me falls ;

Once more before my face

I see the moulder'd Abbey-walls,
 That stand within the chace.

Beyond the lodge the city lies,
 Beneath its drift of smoke ;
 And ah ! with what delighted eyes
 I turn to yonder oak.

For when my passion first began,
 Ere that, which in me burn'd,
 The love, that makes me thrice a man,
 Could hope itself return'd ;

To yonder oak within the field
 I spoke without restraint,
 And with a larger faith appeal'd
 Than Papist unto Saint.

For oft I talk'd with him apart,
 And told him of my choice,
 Until he plagiarised a heart,
 And answer'd with a voice.

Tho' what he whisper'd under Heaven
 None else could understand ;
 I found him garrulously given,
 A babbler in the land.

But since I heard him make reply
 Is many a weary hour ;
 'Twere well to question him, and try
 If yet he keeps the power.

Hail, hidden to the knees in fern,
 Broad Oak of Summer-chace,
 Whose topmost branches can discern
 The roofs of Sumner-place !

Say thou, whereon I carved her name,
 If ever maid or spouse,
 As fair as my Olivia, came
 To rest beneath thy boughs.—

'O Walter, I have shelter'd here
 Whatever maiden grace
 The good old Summers, year by year
 Made ripe in Sumner-chace :

'Old Summers, when the monk was fat,
 And, issuing shorn and sleek,
 Would twist his girdle tight, and pat
 The girls upon the cheek,

'Ere yet, in scorn of Peter's-pence,
 And number'd bead, and shrift,
 Bluff Harry broke into the spence
 And turn'd the cowls adrift :

'And I have seen some score of those
 Fresh faces, that would thrive
 When his man-minded offset rose
 To chase the deer at five ;

'And all that from the town would stroll,
 Till that wild wind made work
 In which the gloomy brewer's soul
 Went by me, like a stork :

'The slight she-slips of loyal blood,
 And others, passing praise,
 Strait-laced, but all-too-full in bud
 For puritanic stays :

'And I have shadow'd many a group
 Of beauties, that were born
 In teacup-times of hood and hoop,
 Or while the patch was worn ;

'And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,
 About me leap'd and laugh'd
 The modish Cupid of the day,
 And shrill'd his tinsel shaft.

'I swear (and else may insects prick
 Each leaf into a gall)
 This girl, for whom your heart is sick,
 Is three times worth them all ;

'For those and theirs, by Nature's law,
 Have faded long ago ;
 But, in these latter springs I saw
 Your own Olivia blow,

'From when she gamboll'd on the greens
 A baby-germ, to when
 The maiden blossoms of her teens
 Could number five from ten.

'I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain,
 (And hear me with thine ears,)
 That, tho' I circle in the grain
 Five hundred rings of years—

'Yet, since I first could cast a shade,
Did never creature pass
So slightly, musically made,
So light upon the grass :

'For as to fairies, that will flit
To make the greensward fresh,
I hold them exquisitely knit,
But far too spare of flesh.'

Oh, hide thy knotted knees in fern,
And overlook the chace ;
And from thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place.

But thou, whereon I carved her name,
That oft hast heard my vows,
Declare when last Olivia came
To sport beneath thy boughs.

'O yesterday, you know, the fair
Was holden at the town ;
Her father left his good arm-chair,
And rode his hunter down.

'And with him Albert came on his.
I look'd at him with joy :
As cowslip unto oxlip is,
So seems she to the boy.

'An hour had past—and, sitting straight
Within the low-wheel'd chaise,
Her mother trundled to the gate
Behind the dappled grays.

'But as for her, she stay'd at home,
And on the roof she went,
And down the way you use to come,
She look'd with discontent.

'She left the novel half-uncut
Upon the rosewood shelf ;
She left the new piano shut :
She could not please herself.

'Then ran she, gamesome as the colt,
And livelier than a lark
She sent her voice thro' all the holt
Before her, and the park.

'A light wind chased her on the wing,
And in the chase grew wild,
As close as might be would he cling
About the darling child :

'But light as any wind that blows
So fleetly did she stir,
The flower, she touch'd on, dipt and rose,
And turn'd to look at her.

'And here she came, and round me play'd,
And sang to me the whole
Of those three stanzas that you made
About my "giant bole ;"

'And in a fit of frolic mirth
She strove to span my waist :
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.

'I wish'd myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock'd her hands.

'Yet seem'd the pressure thrice as sweet
As woodbine's fragile hold,
Or when I feel about my feet
The berried briony fold.'

O muffle round thy knees with fern,
And shadow Sumner-chace !
Long may thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place !

But tell me, did she read the name
I carved with many vows
When last with throbbing heart I came
To rest beneath thy boughs ?

'O yes, she wander'd round and round
These knotted knees of mine,
And found, and kiss'd the name she found,
And sweetly murmur'd thine.

'A teardrop trembled from its source,
And down my surface crept.
My sense of touch is something coarse,
But I believe she wept.

'Then flush'd her cheek with rosy light,
She glanced across the plain ;
But not a creature was in sight :
She kiss'd me once again.

'Her kisses were so close and kind,
That, trust me on my word,
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
But yet my sap was stirr'd :

'And even into my inmost ring
A pleasure I discern'd,
Like those blind motions of the Spring,
That show the year is turn'd.

'Thrice-happy he that may caress
The ringlet's waving balm—
The cushions of whose touch may press
The maiden's tender palm.

'I, rooted here among the groves
But languidly adjust
My vapid vegetable loves
With anthers and with dust :

'For ah ! my friend, the days were brief
Whereof the poets talk,
When that, which breathes within the leaf,
Could slip its bark and walk.

'But could I, as in times foregone,
From spray, and branch, and stem,
Have suck'd and gather'd into one
The life that spreads in them,

'She had not found me so remiss ;
But lightly issuing thro',
I would have paid her kiss for kiss,
With usury thereto.'

O flourish high, with leafy towers,
And overlook the lea,
Pursue thy loves among the bowers
But leave thou mine to me.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
Old oak, I love thee well ;
A thousand thanks for what I learn
And what remains to tell.

'Tis little more : the day was warm ;
At last, tired out with play,
She sank her head upon her arm
And at my feet she lay.

'Her eyelids dropp'd their silken eaves.
I breathed upon her eyes
Thro' all the summer of my leaves
A welcome mix'd with sighs.

'I took the swarming sound of life—
The music from the town—
The murmurs of the drum and fife
And lull'd them in my own.

'Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip,
To light her shaded eye ;
A second flutter'd round her lip
Like a golden butterfly ;

'A third would glimmer on her neck
To make the necklace shine ;
Another slid, a sunny fleck,
From head to ancle fine,

'Then close and dark my arms I spread,
And shadow'd all her rest—
Dropt dews upon her golden head,
An acorn in her breast.

'But in a pet she started up,
And pluck'd it out, and drew
My little oakling from the cup,
And flung him in the dew.

'And yet it was a graceful gift—
I felt a pang within
As when I see the woodman lift
His axe to slay my kin.

'I shook him down because he was
The finest on the tree.
He lies beside thee on the grass.
O kiss him once for me.

'O kiss him twice and thrice for me,
That have no lips to kiss,
For never yet was oak on lea
Shall grow so fair as this.'

Step deeper yet in herb and fern,
 Look further thro' the chace,
 Spread upward till thy boughs discern
 The front of Summer-place.

This fruit of thine by Love is blest,
 That but a moment lay
 Where fairer fruit of Love may rest
 Some happy future day.

I kiss it twice, I kiss it thrice,
 The warmth it thence shall win
 To riper life may magnetise
 The baby-oak within.

But thou, while kingdoms overset,
 Or lapse from hand to hand,
 Thy leaf shall never fail, nor yet
 Thine acorn in the land.

May never saw dismember thee,
 Nor wielded axe disjoint,
 That art the fairest-spoken tree
 From here to Lizard-point.

O rock upon thy towery-top
 All throats that gurgle sweet !
 All starry culmination drop
 Balm-dews to bathe thy feet !

All grass of silky feather grow—
 And while he sinks or swells
 The full south-breeze around thee blow
 The sound of minster bells.

The fat earth feed thy branchy root,
 That under deeply strikes !
 The northern morning o'er thee shoot,
 High up, in silver spikes !

Nor ever lightning char thy grain,
 But, rolling as in sleep,
 Low thunders bring the mellow rain,
 That makes thee broad and deep !

And hear me swear a solemn oath,
 That only by thy side
 Will I to Olive plight my troth,
 And gain her for my bride.

And when my marriage morn may fall,
 She, Dryad-like, shall wear
 Alternate leaf and acorn-ball
 In wreath about her hair.

And I will work in prose and rhyme,
 And praise thee more in both
 Than bard has honour'd beech or lime,
 Or that Thessalian growth,

In which the swarthy ringdove sat,
 And mystic sentence spoke ;
 And more than England honours that,
 Thy famous brother-oak,

Wherein the younger Charles abode
 Till all the paths were dim,
 And far below the Roundhead rode,
 And humm'd a surly hymn.

LOVE AND DUTY.

Of love that never found his earthly close,
 What sequel ? Streaming eyes and break-
 ing hearts ?

Or all the same as if he had not been ?
 Not so. Shall Error in the round of
 time

Still father Truth ? O shall the braggart
 shout

For some blind glimpse of freedom work
 itself

Thro' madness, hated by the wise, to law
 System and empire ? Sin itself be found
 The cloudy porch oft opening on the Sun ?
 And only he, this wonder, dead, become
 Mere highway dust ? or year by year alone
 Sit brooding in the ruins of a life,
 Nightmare of youth, the spectre of him-
 self ?

If this were thus, if this, indeed, were
 all,
 Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,
 The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless
 days,

The long mechanic paces to and fro,
 The set gray life, and apathetic end.
 But am I not the nobler thro' thy love ?
 O three times less unworthy ! likewise
 thou

Art more thro' Love, and greater than
thy years,
The Sun will run his orbit, and the Moon
Her circle. Wait, and Love himself will
bring
The drooping flower of knowledge changed
to fruit
Of wisdom. Wait : my faith is large in
Time,
And that which shapes it to some perfect
end.
Will some one say, Then why not ill
for good ?
Why took ye not your pastime ? To that
man
My work shall answer, since I knew the
right
And did it ; for a man is not as God,
But then most Godlike being most a man.
—So let me think 'tis well for thee and
me—
Ill-fated that I am, what lot is mine
Whose foresight preaches peace, my heart
so slow
To feel it ! For how hard it seem'd to me,
When eyes, love-languid thro' half tears
would dwell
One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,
Then not to dare to see ! when thy low
voice,
Faltering, would break its syllables, to
keep
My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a
leash,
And not leap forth and fall about thy
neck,
And on thy bosom (deep desired relief !)
Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that
weigh'd
Upon my brain, my senses and my soul !
For Love himself took part against
himself
To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—
O this world's curse,—beloved but hated
—came
Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and
mine,
And crying, ' Who is this ? behold thy
bride,'
She push'd me from thee.

If the sense is hard
To alien ears, I did not speak to these—
No, not to thee, but to thyself in me :
Hard is my doom and thine : thou
knowest it all.
Could Love part thus ? was it not well
to speak,
To have spoken once ? It could not but
be well.
The slow sweet hours that bring us all
things good,
The slow sad hours that bring us all
things ill,
And all good things from evil, brought
the night
In which we sat together and alone,
And to the want, that hollow'd all the
heart,
Gave utterance by the yearning of an eye,
That burn'd upon its object thro' such
tears
As flow but once a life.
The trance gave way
To those caresses, when a hundred times
In that last kiss, which never was the last,
Farewell, like endless welcome, lived and
died.
Then follow'd counsel, comfort, and the
words
That make a man feel strong in speaking
truth ;
Till now the dark was worn, and overhead
The lights of sunset and of sunrise mix'd
In that brief night ; the summer night,
that paused
Among her stars to hear us ; stars that
hung
Love-charm'd to listen : all the wheels of
Time
Spun round in station, but the end had
come.
O then like those, who clench their
nerves to rush
Upon their dissolution, we two rose,
There—closing like an individual life—
In one blind cry of passion and of pain,
Like bitter accusation ev'n to death,
Caught up the whole of love and utter'd
it,
And bade adieu for ever.

Live—yet live—
 Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing
 all
 Life needs for life is possible to will—
 Live happy ; tend thy flowers ; be tended
 by
 My blessing ! Should my Shadow cross
 thy thoughts
 Too sadly for their peace, remand it thou
 For calmer hours to Memory's darkest
 hold,
 If not to be forgotten—not at once—
 Not all forgotten. Should it cross thy
 dreams,
 O might it come like one that looks con-
 tent,
 With quiet eyes unfaithful to the truth,
 And point thee forward to a distant light,
 Or seem to lift a burthen from thy heart
 And leave thee freër, till thou wake
 refresh'd
 Then when the first low matin-chirp hath
 grown
 Full quire, and morning driv'n her plow
 of pearl
 Far furrowing into light the mounded
 rack,
 Beyond the fair green field and eastern
 sea.

THE GOLDEN YEAR.

WELL, you shall have that song which
 Leonard wrote :
 It was last summer on a tour in Wales :
 Old James was with me : we that day
 had been
 Up Snowdon ; and I wish'd for Leonard
 there,
 And found him in Llanberis : then we
 crost
 Between the lakes, and clamber'd half
 way up
 The counter side ; and that same song of
 his
 He told me ; for I banter'd him, and
 swore
 They said he lived shut up within himself,
 A tongue-tied Poet in the feverous days,

That, setting the *how much* before the
how,
 Cry, like the daughters of the horseleech,
 ' Give,
 Cram us with all,' but count not me the
 herd !
 To which ' They call me what they
 will,' he said :
 ' But I was born too late : the fair new
 forms,
 That float about the threshold of an age,
 Like truths of Science waiting to be
 caught—
 Catch me who can, and make the catcher
 crown'd—
 Are taken by the forelock. Let it be.
 But if you care indeed to listen, hear
 These measured words, my work of
 yestermorn.
 ' We sleep and wake and sleep, but all
 things move ;
 The Sun flies forward to his brother Sun ;
 The dark Earth follows wheel'd in her
 ellipse ;
 And human things returning on them-
 selves
 Move onward, leading up the golden year.
 ' Ah, tho' the times, when some new
 thought can bud,
 Are but as poets' seasons when they
 flower,
 Yet oceans daily gaining on the land,
 Have ebb and flow conditioning their
 march,
 And slow and sure comes up the golden
 year.
 ' When wealth no more shall rest in
 mounded heaps,
 But smit with freër light shall slowly
 melt
 In many streams to fatten lower lands,
 And light shall spread, and man be liker
 man
 Thro' all the season of the golden year.
 ' Shall eagles not be eagles ? wrens be
 wrens ?
 If all the world were falcons, what of
 that ?
 The wonder of the eagle were the less,
 But he not less the eagle. Happy days

Roll onward, leading up the golden year.
 'Fly, happy happy sails, and bear the
 Press ;
 Fly happy with the mission of the Cross ;
 Knit land to land, and blowing haven-
 ward
 With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear
 of toll,
 Enrich the markets of the golden year.
 'But we grow old. Ah ! when shall
 all men's good
 Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
 Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
 And like a lane of beams athwart the
 sea,
 Thro' all the circle of the golden year ?'
 Thus far he flow'd, and ended ; where-
 upon
 'Ah, folly !' in mimic cadence answer'd
 James—
 'Ah, folly ! for it lies so far away,
 Not in our time, nor in our children's
 time,
 'Tis like the second world to us that live ;
 'Twere all as one to fix our hopes on
 Heaven
 As on this vision of the golden year.'
 With that he struck his staff against
 the rocks
 And broke it,—James,—you know him,
 —old, but full
 Of force and choler, and firm upon his
 feet,
 And like an oaken stock in winter woods,
 O'erflourish'd with the hoary clematis :
 Then added, all in heat :
 'What stuff is this !
 Old writers push'd the happy season
 back,—
 The more fools they,—we forward :
 dreamers both :
 You most, that in an age, when every
 hour
 Must sweat her sixty minutes to the
 death,
 Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman,
 rapt
 Upon the teeming harvest, should not
 plunge
 His hand into the bag : but well I know

That unto him who works, and feels he
 works,
 This same grand year is ever at the
 doors.'
 He spoke ; and, high above, I heard
 them blast
 The steep slate-quarry, and the great
 echo flap
 And buffet round the hills, from bluff to
 bluff.

ULYSSES.

IT little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren
 crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and
 dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and
 know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
 Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
 *Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with
 those
 That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and
 when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known ; cities of
 men
 And manners, climates, councils, govern-
 ments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them
 all ;
 And drunk delight of battle with my
 peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy
 Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met ;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose
 margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled
 on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains : but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something
more,

A bringer of new things ; and vile it
were

For some three suns to store and hoard
myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make
mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the
sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work,
I mine.

There lies the port ; the vessel puffs
her sail :

There gloom the dark broad seas, My
mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and
thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and
opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I
are old ;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the
end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be
done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with
Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the
rocks :

The long day wanes : the slow moon
climbs : the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come,
my friends,

'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose
holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us
down :

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we
knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and
tho'

We are not now that strength which in
old days

Moved earth and heaven ; that which we
are, we are ;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong
in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

TITHONUS.

THE woods decay, the woods decay and
fall,

The vapours weep their burthen to the
ground,

Man comes and tills the field and lies
beneath,

And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality

Consumes : I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,

A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a
dream

The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of
morn.

Alas ! for this gray shadow, once a
man—

So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he
seem'd

To his great heart none other than a God !
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'

Then didst thou grant mine asking with
a smile,

Like wealthy men who care not how they
give.

But thy strong Hours indignant work'd
 their wills,
 And beat me down and marr'd and wasted
 me,
 And tho' they could not end me, left me
 maim'd

To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
 Immortal age beside immortal youth,
 And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
 Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
 Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
 Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill
 with tears

To hear me? Let me go : take back thy
 gift :

Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men,
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
 Where all should pause, as is most meet
 for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart ; there
 comes

A glimpse of that dark world where I
 was born.

Once more the old mysterious glimmer
 steals

From thy pure brows, and from thy
 shoulders pure,

And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
 Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the
 gloom,

Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to
 mine,

Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild
 team

Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke,
 arise,

And shake the darkness from their
 loosen'd manes,

And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo ! ever thus thou growest beautiful
 In silence, then before thine answer
 given

Departest, and thy tears are on my
 cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy
 tears,

And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,

In days far-off, on that dark earth, be
 true ?

' The Gods themselves cannot recall their
 gifts.'

Ay me ! ay me ! with what another
 heart

In days far-off, and with what other eyes
 I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
 The lucid outline forming round thee ;
 saw

The dim curls kindle into sunny rings ;
 Changed with thy mystic change, and
 felt my blood

Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd
 all

Thy presence and thy portals, while I
 lay,

Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-
 warm

With kisses balmier than half-opening
 buds

Of April, and could hear the lips that
 kiss'd

Whispering I knew not what of wild and
 sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo
 sing,

While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East :
 How can my nature longer mix with
 thine ?

Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
 Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled
 feet

Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when
 the steam

Floats up from those dim fields about the
 homes

Of happy men that have the power to
 die,

And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
 Release me, and restore me to the ground ;
 Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my
 grave :

Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by
 morn ;

I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
 And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

LOCKSLEY HALL.

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn :
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall ;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time ;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed ;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed :

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see ;
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.—

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast ;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest ;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove ;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, ' My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, ' I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong ;'
Saying, ' Dost thou love me, cousin ?' weeping, ' I have loved thee long.'

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands ;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted ! O my Amy, mine no more !
O the dreary, dreary moorland ! O the barren, barren shore !

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue !

Is it well to wish thee happy ?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine !

Yet it shall be : thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is : thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this ? his eyes are heavy : think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him : it is thy duty : kiss him : take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought :
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand !

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth !
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth !

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule !
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of the fool !

Well—'tis well that I should bluster !—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit ?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort ? in division of the records of the mind ?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind ?

I remember one that perish'd : sweetly did she speak and move :
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

• Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore ?
No—she never loved me truly : love is love for evermore.

Comfort ? comfort scorn'd of devils ! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whisper'd by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears ;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow : get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace ; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine ; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down : my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his : it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

' They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd '—Perish in thy self-contempt !

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy ! wherefore should I care ?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these ?
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy : what is that which I should do ?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn :

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd string ?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain :

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat ;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starr'd ;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag ;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope and breathing space ;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun ;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains !

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime ?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon !

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day :
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun :
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the Sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall !
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow ;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

GODIVA.

*I waited for the train at Coventry ;
I hung with grooms and porters on the
bridge,
To watch the three tall spires ; and there
I shaped*

The city's ancient legend into this :—

Not only we, the latest seed of Time,
New men, that in the flying of a wheel
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the
people well,

And loathed to see them overtax'd ; but
she

Did more, and underwent, and overcame,
The woman of a thousand summers back,
Godiva, wife to that grim Earl, who ruled
In Coventry : for when he laid a tax
Upon his town, and all the mothers
brought

Their children, clamouring, ' If we pay,
we starve ! '

She sought her lord, and found him, where
he strode

About the hall, among his dogs, alone,
His beard a foot before him, and his hair

A yard behind. She told him of their
tears,

And pray'd him, ' If they pay this tax,
they starve.'

Whereat he stared, replying, half-amazed,
' You would not let your little finger ache
For such as *these* ? '—' But I would die,'
said she.

He laugh'd, and swore by Peter and by
Paul :

Then fillip'd at the diamond in her ear ;
' Oh ay, ay, ay, you talk ! '—' Alas ! ' she
said,

' But prove me what it is I would not do.'
And from a heart as rough as Esau's hand,
He answer'd, ' Ride you naked thro' the
town,

And I repeal it ; ' and nodding, as in scorn,
He parted, with great strides among his
dogs.

So left alone, the passions of her mind,
As winds from all the compass shift and
blow,

Made war upon each other for an hour,
Till pity won. She sent a herald forth,
And bade him cry, with sound of trumpet,
all

The hard condition ; but that she would
 loose
 The people : therefore, as they loved her
 well,
 From then till noon no foot should pace
 the street,
 No eye look down, she passing ; but that all
 Should keep within, door shut, and
 window barr'd.
 Then fled she to her inmost bower,
 and there
 Unclasp'd the wedded eagles of her belt,
 The grim Earl's gift ; but ever at a breath
 She linger'd, looking like a summer moon
 Half-dipt in cloud : anon she shook her
 head,
 And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her
 knee ;
 Unclad herself in haste ; adown the stair
 Stole on ; and, like a creeping sunbeam,
 slid
 From pillar unto pillar, until she reach'd
 The gateway ; there she found her palfrey
 trapt
 In purple blazon'd with armorial gold.
 Then she rode forth, clothed on with
 chastity :
 The deep air listen'd round her as she rode,
 And all the low wind hardly breathed for
 fear.
 The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the
 spout
 Had cunning eyes to see : the barking cur
 Made her cheek flame : her palfrey's foot-
 fall shot
 Light horrors thro' her pulses : the blind
 walls
 Were full of chinks and holes ; and
 overhead
 Fantastic gables, crowding, stared : but she
 Not less thro' all bore up, till, last, she saw
 The white-flower'd elder-thicket from the
 field
 Gleam thro' the Gothic archway in the
 wall.
 Then she rode back, clothed on with
 chastity :
 And one low churl, compact of thankless
 earth,
 The fatal byword of all years to come,

Boring a little auger-hole in fear,
 Peep'd—but his eyes, before they had
 their will,
 Were shrivell'd into darkness in his head,
 And dropt before him. So the Powers,
 who wait
 On noble deeds, cancell'd a sense misused ;
 And she, that knew not, pass'd : and all
 at once,
 With twelve great shocks of sound, the
 shameless noon
 Was clash'd and hammer'd from a hundred
 towers,
 One after one : but even then she gain'd
 Her bower ; whence reissuing, robed and
 crown'd,
 To meet her lord, she took the tax away
 And built herself an everlasting name.

THE DAY-DREAM.

PROLOGUE.

O LADY FLORA, let me speak :
 A pleasant hour has passed away
 While, dreaming on your damask cheek,
 The dewy sister-eyelids lay.
 As by the lattice you reclined,
 I went thro' many wayward moods
 To see you dreaming—and, behind,
 A summer crisp with shining woods.
 And I too dream'd, until at last
 Across my fancy, brooding warm,
 The reflex of a legend past,
 And loosely settled into form.
 And would you have the thought I had,
 And see the vision that I saw,
 Then take the broidery-frame, and add
 A crimson to the quaint Macaw,
 And I will tell it. Turn your face,
 Nor look with that too-earnest eye—
 The rhymes are dazzled from their place
 And order'd words asunder fly.

THE SLEEPING PALACE.

I.

THE varying year with blade and sheaf
 Clothes and re-clothes the happy plains,

Here rests the sap within the leaf,
 Here stays the blood along the veins.
 Faint shadows, vapours lightly curl'd,
 Faint murmurs from the meadows
 come,
 Like hints and echoes of the world
 To spirits folded in the womb.

II.

Soft lustre bathes the range of urns
 On every slanting terrace-lawn.
 The fountain to his place returns
 Deep in the garden lake withdrawn.
 Here droops the banner on the tower,
 On the hall-hearths the festal fires,
 The peacock in his laurel bower,
 The parrot in his gilded wires.

III.

Roof-haunting martins warm their eggs :
 In these, in those the life is stay'd.
 The mantles from the golden pegs
 Droop sleepily : no sound is made,
 Not even of a gnat that sings.
 More like a picture seemeth all
 Than those old portraits of old kings,
 That watch the sleepers from the wall.

IV.

Here sits the Butler with a flask
 Between his knees, half-drain'd ; and
 there
 The wrinkled steward at his task,
 The maid-of-honour blooming fair ;
 The page has caught her hand in his :
 Her lips are sever'd as to speak :
 His own are pouted to a kiss :
 The blush is fix'd upon her cheek.

V.

Till all the hundred summers pass,
 The beams, that thro' the Oriel shine,
 Make prisms in every carven glass,
 And beaker brimm'd with noble wine.
 Each baron at the banquet sleeps,
 Grave faces gather'd in a ring.
 His state the king reposing keeps.
 He must have been a jovial king.

VI.

All round a hedge upshoots, and shows
 At distance like a little wood ;
 Thorns, ivies, woodbine, mistletoes,
 And grapes with bunches red as blood ;
 All creeping plants, a wall of green
 Close-matted, bur and brake and briar,
 And glimpsing over these, just seen,
 High up, the topmost palace spire.

VII.

When will the hundred summers die,
 And thought and time be born again,
 And newer knowledge, drawing nigh,
 Bring truth that sways the soul of men ?
 Here all things in their place remain,
 As all were order'd, ages since.
 Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,
 And bring the fated fairy Prince.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

I.

YEAR after year unto her feet,
 She lying on her couch alone,
 Across the purple coverlet,
 The maiden's jet-black hair has grown,
 On either side her tranced form
 Forth streaming from a braid of pearl :
 The slumbrous light is rich and warm,
 And moves not on the rounded curl.

II.

The silk star-broider'd coverlid
 Unto her limbs itself doth mould
 Languidly ever ; and, amid
 Her full black ringlets downward
 roll'd,
 Glows forth each softly-shadow'd arm
 With bracelets of the diamond bright :
 Her constant beauty doth inform
 Stillness with love, and day with light.

III.

She sleeps : her breathings are not heard
 In palace chambers far apart.
 The fragrant tresses are not stirr'd
 That lie upon her charmed heart.

She sleeps : on either hand upswells
 The gold-fringed pillow lightly
 prest :
 She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells
 A perfect form in perfect rest.

THE ARRIVAL.

I.

ALL precious things, discover'd late,
 To those that seek them issue forth ;
 For love in sequel works with fate,
 And draws the veil from hidden
 worth.

He travels far from other skies—
 His mantle glitters on the rocks—
 A fairy Prince, with joyful eyes,
 And lighter-footed than the fox.

II.

The bodies and the bones of those
 That strove in other days to pass,
 Are wither'd in the thorny close,
 Or scatter'd blanching on the grass.
 He gazes on the silent dead :
 ' They perish'd in their daring deeds.'
 This proverb flashes thro' his head,
 ' The many fail : the one succeeds.'

III.

He comes, scarce knowing what he
 seeks :
 He breaks the hedge : he enters
 there :
 The colour flies into his cheeks :
 He trusts to light on something fair ;
 For all his life the charm did talk
 About his path, and hover near
 With words of promise in his walk,
 And whisper'd voices at his ear.

IV.

More close and close his footsteps
 wind :
 The Magic Music in his heart
 Beats quick and quicker, till he find
 The quiet chamber far apart.

His spirit flutters like a lark,
 He stoops—to kiss her—on his knee.
 ' Love, if thy tresses be so dark,
 How dark those hidden eyes must be !'

THE REVIVAL.

I.

A TOUCH, a kiss ! the charm was snapt.
 There rose a noise of striking clocks,
 And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
 And barking dogs, and crowing cocks ;
 A fuller light illumined all,
 A breeze thro' all the garden swept,
 A sudden hubbub shook the hall,
 And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

II.

The hedge broke in, the banner blew,
 The butler drank, the steward scawl'd,
 The fire shot up, the martin flew,
 The parrot scream'd, the peacock
 squall'd,
 The maid and page renew'd their strife,
 The palace bang'd, and buzz'd and
 clackt,
 And all the long-pent stream of life
 Dash'd downward in a cataract.

III.

And last with these the king awoke,
 And in his chair himself uprear'd,
 And yawn'd, and rubb'd his face, and
 spoke,
 ' By holy rood, a royal beard !
 How say you ? we have slept, my lords.
 My beard has grown into my lap.'
 The barons swore, with many words,
 'Twas but an after-dinner's nap.

IV.

' Pardy,' return'd the king, ' but still
 My joints are somewhat stiff or so.
 My lord, and shall we pass the bill
 I mention'd half an hour ago ?'
 The chancellor, sedate and vain,
 In courteous words return'd reply :
 But dallied with his golden chain,
 And, smiling, put the question by.

THE DEPARTURE.

I.

AND on her lover's arm she leant,
 And round her waist she felt it fold,
 And far across the hills they went
 In that new world which is the old :
 Across the hills, and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 And deep into the dying day
 The happy princess follow'd him.

II.

'I'd sleep another hundred years,
 O love, for such another kiss ;'
 'O wake for ever, love,' she hears,
 'O love, 'twas such as this and this.'
 And o'er them many a sliding star,
 And many a merry wind was borne,
 And, stream'd thro' many a golden bar,
 The twilight melted into morn.

III.

'O eyes long laid in happy sleep !'
 'O happy sleep, that lightly fled !'
 'O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep !'
 'O love, thy kiss would wake the dead !'
 And o'er them many a flowing range
 Of vapour buoy'd the crescent-bark,
 And, rapt thro' many a rosy change,
 The twilight died into the dark.

IV.

'A hundred summers ! can it be ?
 And whither goest thou, tell me where ?'
 'O seek my father's court with me,
 For there are greater wonders there.'
 And o'er the hills, and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 Beyond the night, across the day,
 Thro' all the world she follow'd him.

MORAL.

I.

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,
 And if you find no moral there,
 Go, look in any glass and say,
 What moral is in being fair.

Oh, to what uses shall we put
 The wildweed-flower that simply blows ?
 And is there any moral shut
 Within the bosom of the rose ?

II.

But any man that walks the mead,
 In bud or blade, or bloom, may find,
 According as his humours lead,
 A meaning suited to his mind.
 And liberal applications lie
 In Art like Nature, dearest friend ;
 So 'twere to cramp its use, if I
 Should hook it to some useful end.

L'ENVOI.

I.

You shake your head. A random string
 Your finer female sense offends.
 Well—were it not a pleasant thing
 To fall asleep with all one's friends ;
 To pass with all our social ties
 To silence from the paths of men ;
 And every hundred years to rise
 And learn the world, and sleep again ;
 To sleep thro' terms of mighty wars,
 And wake on science grown to more,
 On secrets of the brain, the stars,
 As wild as aught of fairy lore ;
 And all that else the years will show,
 The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
 The vast Republics that may grow,
 The Federations and the Powers ;
 Titanic forces taking birth
 In divers seasons, divers climes ;
 For we are Ancients of the earth,
 And in the morning of the times.

II.

So sleeping, so aroused from sleep
 Thro' sunny decads new and strange,
 Or gay quinquennials would we reap
 The flower and quintessence of change.

III.

Ah, yet would I—and would I might !
 So much your eyes my fancy take—
 Be still the first to leap to light
 That I might kiss those eyes awake !

For, am I right, or am I wrong,
 To choose your own you did not care ;
 You'd have *my* moral from the song,
 And I will take my pleasure there :
 And, am I right or am I wrong,
 My fancy, ranging thro' and thro',
 To search a meaning for the song,
 Perforce will still revert to you ;
 Nor finds a closer truth than this
 All-graceful head, so richly curl'd,
 And evermore a costly kiss
 The prelude to some brighter world.

IV.

For since the time when Adam first
 Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
 And every bird of Eden burst
 In carol, every bud to flower,
 What eyes, like thine, have waken'd
 hopes,
 What lips, like thine, so sweetly
 join'd ?
 Where on the double rosebud droops
 The fulness of the pensive mind ;
 Which all too dearly self-involved,
 Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me ;
 A sleep by kisses undissolved,
 That lets thee neither hear nor see :
 But break it. In the name of wife,
 And in the rights that name may
 give,
 Are clasp'd the moral of thy life,
 And that for which I care to live.

EPILOGUE.

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,
 And, if you find a meaning there,
 O whisper to your glass, and say,
 ' What wonder, if he thinks me fair ?'
 What wonder I was all unwise,
 To shape the song for your delight
 Like long-tail'd birds of Paradise
 That float thro' Heaven, and cannot
 light ?
 Or old-world trains, upheld at court
 By Cupid-boys of blooming hue—
 But take it—earnest wed with sport,
 And either sacred unto you.

AMPHION.

My father left a park to me,
 But it is wild and barren,
 A garden too with scarce a tree,
 And waster than a warren :
 Yet say the neighbours when they call,
 It is not bad but good land,
 And in it is the germ of all
 That grows within the woodland.

O had I lived when song was great
 In days of old Amphion,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 Nor cared for seed or scion !
 And had I lived when song was great,
 And legs of trees were limber,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 And fiddled in the timber !

'Tis said he had a tuneful tongue,
 Such happy intonation,
 Wherever he sat down and sung
 He left a small plantation ;
 Wherever in a lonely grove
 He set up his forlorn pipes,
 The gouty oak began to move,
 And flounder into hornpipes.

The mountain stirr'd its bushy crown,
 And, as tradition teaches,
 Young ashes pirouetted down
 Coquetting with young beeches ;
 And briony-vine and ivy-wreath
 Ran forward to his rhyming,
 And from the valleys underneath
 Came little copses climbing.

The linden broke her ranks and rent
 The woodbine wreaths that bind her,
 And down the middle, buzz ! she went
 With all her bees behind her :
 The poplars, in long order due,
 With cypress promenaded,
 The shock-head willows two and two
 By rivers galloped.

Came wet-shod alder from the wave,
 Came yews, a dismal coterie ;
 Each pluck'd his one foot from the grave,
 Poussetting with a sloe-tree :

Old elms came breaking from the vine,
The vine stream'd out to follow,
And, sweating rosin, plump'd the pine
From many a cloudy hollow.

And wasn't it a sight to see,
When, ere his song was ended,
Like some great landslip, tree by tree,
The country-side descended ;
And shepherds from the mountain-eaves
Look'd down, half-pleased, half-fright-
en'd,
As dash'd about the drunken leaves
The random sunshine lighten'd !

Oh, nature first was fresh to men,
And wanton without measure ;
So youthful and so flexible then,
You moved her at your pleasure.
Twang out, my fiddle ! shake the
twigs !
And make her dance attendance ;
Blow, flute, and stir the stiff-set sprigs,
And scirrhous roots and tendons.

'Tis vain ! in such a brassy age
I could not move a thistle ;
The very sparrows in the hedge
Scarce answer to my whistle ;
Or at the most, when three-parts-sick
With strumming and with scraping,
A jackass heehaws from the rick,
The passive oxen gaping.

But what is that I hear ? a sound
Like sleepy counsel pleading ;
O Lord !—'tis in my neighbour's ground,
The modern Muses reading.
They read Botanic Treatises,
And Works on Gardening thro' there,
And Methods of transplanting trees
To look as if they grew there.

The wither'd Misses ! how they prose
O'er books of travell'd seamen,
And show you slips of all that grows
From England to Van Diemen.
They read in arbours clipt and cut,
And alleys, faded places,
By squares of tropic summer shut
And warm'd in crystal cases.

But these, tho' fed with careful dirt,
Are neither green nor sappy ;
Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,
The spindlings look unhappy.
Better to me the meanest weed
That blows upon its mountain,
The vilest herb that runs to seed
Beside its native fountain.

And I must work thro' months of toil,
And years of cultivation,
Upon my proper patch of soil
To grow my own plantation.
I'll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom :
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom.

ST. AGNES' EVE.

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon :
My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
May my soul follow soon !
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord :
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round ;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee ;
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;
The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,

And deepens on and up ! the gates
 Roll back, and far within
 For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin.
 The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide—
 A light upon the shining sea—
 The Bridegroom with his bride !

SIR GALAHAD.

My good blade carves the casques of men,
 My tough lance thrusteth sure,
 My strength is as the strength of ten,
 Because my heart is pure.
 The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
 The hard brands shiver on the steel,
 The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
 The horse and rider reel :
 They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
 And when the tide of combat stands,
 Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
 That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
 On whom their favours fall !
 For them I battle till the end,
 To save from shame and thrall :
 But all my heart is drawn above,
 My knees are bow'd in crypt and
 shrine :

I never felt the kiss of love,
 Nor maiden's hand in mine.
 More bounteous aspects on me beam,
 Me mightier transports move and thrill ;
 So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
 A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
 A light before me swims,
 Between dark stems the forest glows,
 I hear a noise of hymns :
 Then by some secret shrine I ride ;
 I hear a voice but none are there ;
 The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
 The tapers burning fair.
 Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
 The silver vessels sparkle clean,
 The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
 And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
 I find a magic bark ;
 I leap on board : no helmsman steers :
 I float till all is dark.
 A gentle sound, an awful light !
 Three angels bear the holy Grail :
 With folded feet, in stoles of white,
 On sleeping wings they sail.
 Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !
 My spirit beats her mortal bars,
 As down dark tides the glory slides,
 And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
 Thro' dreaming towns I go,
 The cock crows ere the Christmas
 morn,
 The streets are dumb with snow.
 The tempest crackles on the leads,
 And, ringing, springs from brand and
 mail ;
 But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
 And gilds the driving hail.
 I leave the plain, I climb the height ;
 No branchy thicket shelter yields ;
 But blessed forms in whistling storms
 Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
 Such hope, I know not fear ;
 I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
 That often meet me here.
 I muse on joy that will not cease,
 Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
 Pure lilies of eternal peace,
 Whose odours haunt my dreams ;
 And, stricken by an angel's hand,
 This mortal armour that I wear,
 This weight and size, this heart and
 eyes,
 Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
 And thro' the mountain-walls
 A rolling organ-harmony
 Swells up, and shakes and falls.
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
 ' O just and faithful knight of God !
 Ride on ! the prize is near.'

So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
 By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
 All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
 Until I find the holy Grail.

EDWARD GRAY.

SWEET Emma Moreland of yonder town
 Met me walking on yonder way,
 'And have you lost your heart ?' she said ;
 'And are you married yet, Edward
 Gray ?'

Sweet Emma Moreland spoke to me :
 Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :
 'Sweet Emma Moreland, love no more
 Can touch the heart of Edward Gray.

'Ellen Adair she loved me well,
 Against her father's and mother's will :
 To-day I sat for an hour and wept,
 By Ellen's grave, on the windy hill.

'Shy she was, and I thought her cold ;
 Thought her proud, and fled over the sea ;
 Fill'd I was with folly and spite,
 When Ellen Adair was dying for me.

'Cruel, cruel the words I said !
 Cruelly came they back to-day :
 "You're too slight and fickle," I said,
 "To trouble the heart of Edward Gray."

'There I put my face in the grass—
 Whisper'd, "Listen to my despair :
 I repent me of all I did :
 Speak a little, Ellen Adair !"

'Then I took a pencil, and wrote
 On the mossy stone, as I lay,
 "Here lies the body of Ellen Adair ;
 And here the heart of Edward Gray !"

'Love may come, and love may go,
 And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree ;
 But I will love no more, no more,
 Till Ellen Adair come back to me.

'Bitterly wept I over the stone :
 Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :
 There lies the body of Ellen Adair !
 And there the heart of Edward Gray !'

WILL WATERPROOF'S
LYRICAL MONOLOGUE.

MADE AT THE COCK.

O PLUMP head-waiter at The Cock,
 To which I most resort,
 How goes the time ? 'Tis five o'clock.
 Go fetch a pint of port :
 But let it not be such as that
 You set before chance-comers,
 But such whose father-grape grew fat
 On Lusitanian summers.

No vain libation to the Muse,
 But may she still be kind,
 And whisper lovely words, and use
 Her influence on the mind,
 To make me write my random rhymes,
 Ere they be half-forgotten ;
 Nor add and alter, many times,
 Till all be ripe and rotten.

I pledge her, and she comes and dips
 Her laurel in the wine,
 And lays it thrice upon my lips,
 These favour'd lips of mine ;
 Until the charm have power to make
 New lifeblood warm the bosom,
 And barren commonplaces break
 In full and kindly blossom.

I pledge her silent at the board ;
 Her gradual fingers steal
 And touch upon the master-chord
 Of all I felt and feel.
 Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
 And phantom hopes assemble ;
 And that child's heart within the man's
 Begins to move and tremble.

Thro' many an hour of summer suns,
 By many pleasant ways,
 Against its fountain upward runs
 The current of my days :
 I kiss the lips I once have kiss'd ;
 The gas-light wavers dimmer ;
 And softly, thro' a vinous mist,
 My college friendships glimmer.

I grow in worth, and wit, and sense,
 Unboding critic-pen,
 Or that eternal want of pence,
 Which vexes public men,
 Who hold their hands to all, and cry
 For that which all deny them—
 Who sweep the crossings, wet or dry,
 And all the world go by them.

Ah yet, tho' all the world forsake,
 Tho' fortune clip my wings,
 I will not cramp my heart, nor take
 Half-views of men and things.
 Let Whig and Tory stir their blood ;
 There must be stormy weather ;
 But for some true result of good
 All parties work together.

Let there be thistles, there are grapes ;
 If old things, there are new ;
 Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,
 Yet glimpses of the true.
 Let riffs be rife in prose and rhyme,
 We lack not rhymes and reasons,
 As on this whirligig of Time
 We circle with the seasons.

This earth is rich in man and maid ;
 With fair horizons bound :
 This whole wide earth of light and shade
 Comes out a perfect round.
 High over roaring Temple-bar,
 And set in Heaven's third story,
 I look at all things as they are,
 But thro' a kind of glory.

Head-waiter, honour'd by the guest
 Half-mused, or reeling ripe,
 The pint, you brought me, was the best
 That ever came from pipe.
 But tho' the port surpasses praise,
 My nerves have dealt with stiffer.
 Is there some magic in the place ?
 Or do my peptics differ ?

For since I came to live and learn,
 No pint of white or red
 Had ever half the power to turn
 This wheel within my head,

Which bears a season'd brain about,
 Unsubject to confusion,
 Tho' soak'd and saturate, out and out,
 Thro' every convolution.

For I am of a numerous house,
 With many kinsmen gay,
 Where long and largely we carouse
 As who shall say me nay :
 Each month, a birth-day coming on,
 We drink defying trouble,
 Or sometimes two would meet in one,
 And then we drank it double ;

Whether the vintage, yet unkept,
 Had relish fiery-new,
 Or elbow-deep in sawdust, slept,
 As old as Waterloo ;
 Or stow'd, when classic Canning died,
 In musty bins and chambers,
 Had cast upon its crusty side
 The gloom of ten Decembers.

The Muse, the jolly Muse, it is !
 She answer'd to my call,
 She changes with that mood or this,
 Is all-in-all to all :
 She lit the spark within my throat,
 To make my blood run quicker,
 Used all her fiery will, and smote
 Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about
 The waiter's hands, that reach
 To each his perfect pint of stout,
 His proper chop to each.
 He looks not like the common breed
 That with the napkin dally ;
 I think he came like Ganymede,
 From some delightful valley.

The Cock was of a larger egg
 Than modern poultry drop,
 Stept forward on a firmer leg,
 And cramm'd a plumper crop ;
 Upon an ampler dunghill trod,
 Crow'd lustier late and early,
 Sipt wine from silver, praising God,
 And raked in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,
 Till in a court he saw
 A something-pottle-bodied boy
 That knuckled at the taw :
 He stoop'd and clutch'd him, fair and
 good,
 Flew over roof and casement :
 His brothers of the weather stood
 Stock-still for sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe and spire,
 And follow'd with acclaims,
 A sign to many a staring shire
 Came crowing over Thames.
 Right down by smoky Paul's they bore,
 Till, where the street grows straiter,
 One fix'd for ever at the door,
 And one became head-waiter.

But whither would my fancy go ?
 How out of place she makes
 The violet of a legend blow
 Among the chops and steaks !
 'Tis but a steward of the can,
 One shade more plump than common ;
 As just and mere a serving-man
 As any born of woman.

I ranged too high : what draws me down
 Into the common day ?
 Is it the weight of that half-crown,
 Which I shall have to pay ?
 For, something duller than at first,
 Nor wholly comfortable,
 I sit, my empty glass reversed,
 And thrumming on the table :

Half fearful that, with self at strife,
 I take myself to task ;
 Lest of the fulness of my life
 I leave an empty flask :
 For I had hope, by something rare
 To prove myself a poet :
 But, while I plan and plan, my hair
 Is gray before I know it.

So fares it since the years began,
 Till they be gather'd up ;
 The truth, that flies the flowing can,
 Will haunt the vacant cup :

And others' follies teach us not,
 Nor much their wisdom teaches ;
 And most, of sterling worth, is what
 Our own experience preaches.

Ah, let the rusty theme alone !
 We know not what we know.
 But for my pleasant hour, 'tis gone ;
 'Tis gone, and let it go.
 'Tis gone : a thousand such have slept
 Away from my embraces,
 And fall'n into the dusty crypt
 Of darken'd forms and faces.

Go, therefore, thou ! thy betters went
 Long since, and came no more ;
 With peals of genial clamour sent
 From many a tavern-door,
 With twisted quirks and happy hits,
 From misty men of letters ;
 The tavern-hours of mighty wits—
 Thine elders and thy betters.

Hours, when the Poet's words and looks
 Had yet their native glow :
 Nor yet the fear of little books
 Had made him talk for show ;
 But, all his vast heart sherris-warm'd,
 He flash'd his random speeches,
 Ere days, that deal in ana, swarm'd
 His literary leeches.

So mix for ever with the past,
 Like all good things on earth !
 For should I prize thee, couldst thou
 last,

At half thy real worth ?
 I hold it good, good things should pass :
 With time I will not quarrel :
 It is but yonder empty glass
 That makes me maudlin-moral.

Head-waiter of the chop-house here,
 To which I most resort,
 I too must part : I hold thee dear
 For this good pint of port.
 For this, thou shalt from all things suck
 Marrow of mirth and laughter ;
 And wheresoe'er thou move, good luck
 Shall fling her old shoe after.

But thou wilt never move from hence,
 The sphere thy fate allots :
 Thy latter days increased with pence
 Go down among the pots :
 Thou battenest by the greasy gleam
 In haunts of hungry sinners,
 Old boxes, larded with the steam
 Of thirty thousand dinners.

We fret, we fume, would shift our skins,
 Would quarrel with our lot ;
 Thy care is, under polish'd tins,
 To serve the hot-and-hot ;
 To come and go, and come again,
 Returning like the pewit,
 And watch'd by silent gentlemen,
 That trifle with the cruet.

Live long, ere from thy topmost head
 The thick-set hazel dies ;
 Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread
 The corners of thine eyes :
 Live long, nor feel in head or chest
 Our changeful equinoxes,
 Till mellow Death, like some late guest,
 Shall call thee from the boxes.

But when he calls, and thou shalt cease
 To pace the gritted floor,
 And, laying down an unctuous lease
 Of life, shalt earn no more ;
 No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,
 Shall show thee thine past to Heaven :
 But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,
 A pint-pot neatly graven.

LADY CLARE.

IT was the time when lilies blow,
 And clouds are highest up in air,
 Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe
 To give his cousin, Lady Clare.

I trow they did not part in scorn :
 Lovers long-betroth'd were they :
 They two will wed the morrow morn :
 God's blessing on the day !

'He does not love me for my birth,
 Nor for my lands so broad and fair ;
 He loves me for my own true worth,
 And that is well,' said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,
 Said, 'Who was this that went from
 thee ?'

'It was my cousin,' said Lady Clare,
 'To-morrow he weds with me.'

'O God be thank'd !' said Alice the
 nurse,

'That all comes round so just and fair :
 Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
 And you are *not* the Lady Clare.'

'Are ye out of your mind, my nurse,
 my nurse ?'

Said Lady Clare, 'that ye speak so
 wild ?'

'As God's above,' said Alice the nurse,
 'I speak the truth : you are my child.'

'The old Earl's daughter died at my
 breast ;

I speak the truth, as I live by bread !
 I buried her like my own sweet child,
 And put my child in her stead.'

'Falsely, falsely have ye done,
 O mother,' she said, 'if this be true,
 To keep the best man under the sun
 So many years from his due.'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the
 nurse,

'But keep the secret for your life,
 And all you have will be Lord Ronald's,
 When you are man and wife.'

'If I'm a beggar born,' she said,
 'I will speak out, for I dare not lie.
 Pull off, pull off, the brooch of gold,
 And fling the diamond necklace by.'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the
 nurse,

'But keep the secret all ye can.'
 She said, 'Not so : but I will know
 If there be any faith in man.'

'Nay now, what faith ?' said Alice the
 nurse,

'The man will cleave unto his right.'
 'And he shall have it,' the lady replied,
 'Tho' I should die to-night.'

'Yet give one kiss to your mother dear !
 Alas, my child, I sinn'd for thee.'
 'O mother, mother, mother,' she said,
 'So strange it seems to me.

'Yet here's a kiss for my mother dear,
 My mother dear, if this be so,
 And lay your hand upon my head,
 And bless me, mother, ere I go.'

She clad herself in a russet gown,
 She was no longer Lady Clare :
 She went by dale, and she went by down,
 With a single rose in her hair.

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had
 brought
 Leapt up from where she lay,
 Dropt her head in the maiden's hand,
 And follow'd her all the way.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower :
 'O Lady Clare, you shame your worth !
 Why come you drest like a village maid,
 That are the flower of the earth ?'

'If I come drest like a village maid,
 I am but as my fortunes are :
 I am a beggar born,' she said,
 'And not the Lady Clare.'

'Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
 'For I am yours in word and in deed.
 Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
 'Your riddle is hard to read.'

O and proudly stood she up !
 Her heart within her did not fail :
 She look'd into Lord Ronald's eyes,
 And told him all her nurse's tale.

He laugh'd a laugh of merry scorn :
 He turn'd and kiss'd her where she
 stood :

'If you are not the heiress born,
 And I,' said he, 'the next in blood—

'If you are not the heiress born,
 And I,' said he, 'the lawful heir,
 We two will wed to-morrow morn,
 And you shall still be Lady Clare.'

THE CAPTAIN.

A LEGEND OF THE NAVY.

HE that only rules by terror
 Doeth grievous wrong.
 Deep as Hell I count his error.
 Let him hear my song.
 Brave the Captain was : the seamen
 Made a gallant crew,
 Gallant sons of English freemen,
 Sailors bold and true.
 But they hated his oppression,
 Stern he was and rash ;
 So for every light transgression
 Doom'd them to the lash.
 Day by day more harsh and cruel
 Seem'd the Captain's mood.
 Secret wrath like smother'd fuel
 Burnt in each man's blood.
 Yet he hoped to purchase glory,
 Hoped to make the name
 Of his vessel great in story,
 Wheresoe'er he came.
 So they past by capes and islands,
 Many a harbour-mouth,
 Sailing under palmy highlands
 Far within the South.
 On a day when they were going
 O'er the lone expanse,
 In the north, her canvas flowing,
 Rose a ship of France.
 Then the Captain's colour heighten'd,
 Joyful came his speech :
 But a cloudy gladness lighten'd
 In the eyes of each.
 'Chase,' he said : the ship flew for-
 ward,
 And the wind did blow ;
 Stately, lightly, went she Norward,
 Till she near'd the foe.
 Then they look'd at him they hated,
 Had what they desired :
 Mute with folded arms they waited—
 Not a gun was fired.
 But they heard the foeman's thunder
 Roaring out their doom ;
 All the air was torn in sunder,
 Crashing went the boom,

Spars were splinter'd, decks were shatter'd,
 Bullets fell like rain ;
 Over mast and deck were scatter'd
 Blood and brains of men.
 Spars were splinter'd ; decks were broken :
 Every mother's son—
 Down they dropt—no word was spoken—
 Each beside his gun.
 On the decks as they were lying,
 Were their faces grim.
 In their blood, as they lay dying,
 Did they smile on him.
 Those, in whom he had reliance
 For his noble name,
 With one smile of still defiance
 Sold him unto shame.
 Shame and wrath his heart confounded,
 Pale he turn'd and red,
 Till himself was deadly wounded
 Falling on the dead.
 Dismal error ! fearful slaughter !
 Years have wander'd by,
 Side by side beneath the water
 Crew and Captain lie ;
 There the sunlit ocean tosses
 O'er them mouldering,
 And the lonely seabird crosses
 With one waft of the wing.

THE LORD OF BURLEIGH.

In her ear he whispers gaily,
 'If my heart by signs can tell,
 Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
 And I think thou lov'st me well.'
 She replies, in accents fainter,
 'There is none I love like thee.'
 He is but a landscape-painter,
 And a village maiden she.
 He to lips, that fondly falter,
 Presses his without reproof :
 Leads her to the village altar,
 And they leave her father's roof.
 'I can make no marriage present :
 Little can I give my wife.
 Love will make our cottage pleasant,
 And I love thee more than life.'
 They by parks and lodges going
 See the lordly castles stand :

Summer woods, about them blowing,
 Made a murmur in the land.
 From deep thought himself he rouses,
 Says to her that loves him well,
 'Let us see these handsome houses
 Where the wealthy nobles dwell.'
 So she goes by him attended,
 Hears him lovingly converse,
 Sees whatever fair and splendid
 Lay betwixt his home and hers ;
 Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
 Parks and order'd gardens great,
 Ancient homes of lord and lady,
 Built for pleasure and for state.
 All he shows her makes him dearer :
 Evermore she seems to gaze
 On that cottage growing nearer,
 Where they twain will spend their days
 O but she will love him truly !
 He shall have a cheerful home ;
 She will order all things duly,
 When beneath his roof they come.
 Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
 Till a gateway she discerns
 With armorial bearings stately,
 And beneath the gate she turns ;
 Sees a mansion more majestic
 Than all those she saw before :
 Many a gallant gay domestic
 Bows before him at the door.
 And they speak in gentle murmur,
 When they answer to his call,
 While he treads with footstep firmer,
 Leading on from hall to hall.
 And, while now she wonders blindly,
 Nor the meaning can divine,
 Proudly turns he round and kindly,
 'All of this is mine and thine.'
 Here he lives in state and bounty,
 Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
 Not a lord in all the county
 Is so great a lord as he.
 All at once the colour flushes
 Her sweet face from brow to chin .
 As it were with shame she blushes,
 And her spirit changed within.
 Then her countenance all over
 Pale again as death did prove :
 But he clasp'd her like a lover,
 And he cheer'd her soul with love.

So she strove against her weakness,
 Tho' at times her spirit sank :
 Shaped her heart with woman's meekness
 To all duties of her rank :
 And a gentle consort made he,
 And her gentle mind was such
 That she grew a noble lady,
 And the people loved her much.
 But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
 And perplex'd her, night and morn,
 With the burthen of an honour
 Unto which she was not born.
 Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
 And she murmur'd, 'Oh, that he
 Were once more that landscape-painter,
 Which did win my heart from me !'
 So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
 Fading slowly from his side :
 Three fair children first she bore him,
 Then before her time she died.
 Weeping, weeping late and early,
 Walking up and pacing down,
 Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
 Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
 And he came to look upon her,
 And he look'd at her and said,
 Bring the dress and put it on her,
 That she wore when she was wed.'
 Then her people, softly treading,
 Bore to earth her body, drest
 In the dress that she was wed in,
 That her spirit might have rest.

THE VOYAGE.

I.

WE left behind the painted buoy
 That tosses at the harbour-mouth ;
 And madly danced our hearts with joy,
 As fast we fled to the South :
 How fresh was every sight and sound
 On open main or winding shore !
 We knew the merry world was round,
 And we might sail for evermore.

II.

Warm broke the breeze against the
 brow,
 Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail :

The Lady's-head upon the prow
 Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the
 gale.
 The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
 And swept behind ; so quick the run,
 We felt the good ship shake and reel,
 We seem'd to sail into the Sun !

III.

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
 And burn the threshold of the night,
 Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
 And sleep beneath his pillar'd light !
 How oft the purple-skirted robe
 Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
 As thro' the slumber of the globe
 Again we dash'd into the dawn !

IV.

New stars all night above the brim
 Of waters lighten'd into view ;
 They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
 Changed every moment as we flew.
 Far ran the naked moon across
 The houseless ocean's heaving field,
 Or flying shone, the silver boss
 Of her own halo's dusky shield ;

V.

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,
 We past long lines of Northern capes
 And dewy Northern meadows green.
 We came to warmer waves, and deep
 Across the boundless east we drove,
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

VI.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering
 brine
 With ashy rains, that spreading made
 Fantastic plume or sable pine ;
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

VII.

O hundred shores of happy climes,
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark !
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
 With wakes of fire we tore the dark ;
 At times a carven craft would shoot
 From havens hid in fairy bowers,
 With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
 But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

VIII.

For one fair Vision ever fled
 Down the waste waters day and night,
 And still we follow'd where she led,
 In hope to gain upon her flight.
 Her face was evermore unseen,
 And fixt upon the far sea-line ;
 But each man murmur'd, 'O my Queen,
 I follow till I make thee mine.'

IX.

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd
 Like Fancy made of golden air,
 Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
 Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
 Now high on waves that idly burst
 Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the
 sea,
 And now, the bloodless point reversed,
 She bore the blade of Liberty.

X.

And only one among us—him
 We pleased not—he was seldom
 pleased :
 He saw not far : his eyes were dim :
 But ours he swore were all diseased.
 'A ship of fools,' he shriek'd in spite,
 'A ship of fools,' he sneer'd and
 wept.
 And overboard one stormy night
 He cast his body, and on we swept.

XI.

And never sail of ours was furl'd,
 Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn ;
 We lov'd the glories of the world,
 But laws of nature were our scorn.

For blasts would rise and rave and cease,
 But whence were those that drove the
 sail

Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,
 And to and thro' the counter gale ?

XII.

Again to colder climes we came,
 For still we follow'd where she led :
 Now mate is blind and captain lame,
 And half the crew are sick or dead,
 But, blind or lame or sick or sound,
 We follow that which flies before :
 We know the merry world is round,
 And we may sail for evermore.

SIR LAUNCELOT AND
QUEEN GUINEVERE.

A FRAGMENT.

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,
 With tears and smiles from heaven again
 The maiden Spring upon the plain
 Came in a sun-lit fall of rain.

In crystal vapour everywhere
 Blue isles of heaven laugh'd between,
 And far, in forest-deeps unseen,
 The topmost elm-tree gather'd green
 From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song :
 Sometimes the thristle whistled strong :
 Sometimes the sparrowhawk, wheel'd along,
 Hush'd all the groves from fear of wrong :

By grassy capes with fuller sound
 In curves the yellowing river ran,
 And drooping chestnut-buds began
 To spread into the perfect fan,
 Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
 Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
 Rode thro' the coverts of the deer,
 With blissful treble ringing clear.

She seem'd a part of joyous Spring
 A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
 Buckled with golden clasps before ;
 A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
 Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,
 Now by some tinkling rivulet,
 In mosses mixt with violet
 Her cream-white mule his pastern set :
 And fleeter now she skimm'd the
 plains
 Than she whose elfin prancer springs
 By night to eery warblings,
 When all the glimmering moorland rings
 With jingling bridle-reins.

As fast she fled thro' sun and shade,
 The happy winds upon her play'd,
 Blowing the ringlet from the braid :
 She look'd so lovely, as she sway'd
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,
 A man had given all other bliss,
 And all his worldly worth for this,
 To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.

A FAREWELL.

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
 Thy tribute wave deliver :
 No more by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
 A rivulet then a river :
 No where by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
 And here thine aspen shiver ;
 And here by thee will hum the bee,
 For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
 A thousand moons will quiver ;
 But not by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

THE BEGGAR MAID.

HER arms across her breast she laid ;
 She was more fair than words can say :
 Bare-footed came the beggar maid
 Before the king Cophetua.

In robe and crown the king stept down,
 To meet and greet her on her way ;
 'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
 'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
 She in her poor attire was seen :
 One praised her ancles, one her eyes,
 One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
 So sweet a face, such angel grace,
 In all that land had never been :
 Cophetua sware a royal oath :
 'This beggar maid shall be my queen !'

THE EAGLE.

FRAGMENT.

HE clasps the crag with crooked hands ;
 Close to the sun in lonely lands,
 Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls ;
 He watches from his mountain walls,
 And like a thunderbolt he falls.

MOVE eastward, happy earth, and leave
 Yon orange sunset waning slow :
 From fringes of the faded eve,
 O, happy planet, eastward go ;
 Till over thy dark shoulder glow
 Thy silver sister-world, and rise
 To glass herself in dewy eyes
 That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
 Dip forward under starry light,
 And move me to my marriage-morn,
 And round again to happy night.

COME not, when I am dead,
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my
 grave,
 To trample round my fallen head,
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst
 not save.
 There let the wind sweep and the plover
 cry ;
 But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime
 I care no longer, being all unblessed :
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of
 Time,
 And I desire to rest.
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where
 I lie :
 Go by, go by.

THE LETTERS.

I.

STILL on the tower stood the vane,
 A black yew gloom'd the stagnant air,
 I peer'd athwart the chancel pane
 And saw the altar cold and bare.
 A clog of lead was round my feet,
 A band of pain across my brow ;
 'Cold altar, Heaven and earth shall meet
 Before you hear my marriage vow.'

II.

I turn'd and humm'd a bitter song
 That mock'd the wholesome human
 heart,
 And then we met in wrath and wrong,
 We met, but only meant to part.
 Full cold my greeting was and dry ;
 She faintly smiled, she hardly moved ;
 I saw with half-unconscious eye
 She wore the colours I approved.

III.

She took the little ivory chest,
 With half a sigh she turn'd the key,
 Then raised her head with lips comprest,
 And gave my letters back to me.
 And gave the trinkets and the rings,
 My gifts, when gifts of mine could
 please ;
 As looks a father on the things
 Of his dead son, I look'd on these.

IV.

She told me all her friends had said ;
 I raged against the public liar ;
 She talk'd as if her love were dead,
 But in my words were seeds of fire.

'No more of love ; your sex is known :
 I never will be twice deceived.
 Henceforth I trust the man alone,
 The woman cannot be believed.

V.

'Thro' slander, meanest spawn of Hell—
 And women's slander is the worst,
 And you, whom once I lov'd so well,
 Thro' you, my life will be accurst.'
 I spoke with heart, and heat and force,
 I shook her breast with vague alarms—
 Like torrents from a mountain source
 We rush'd into each other's arms.

VI.

We parted : sweetly gleam'd the stars,
 And sweet the vapour-braided blue,
 Low breezes fann'd the belfry bars,
 As homeward by the church I drew.
 The very graves appear'd to smile,
 So fresh they rose in shadow'd swells :
 'Dark porch,' I said, 'and silent aisle,
 There comes a sound of marriage bells.'

THE VISION OF SIN.

I.

I HAD a vision when the night was late :
 A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
 He rode a horse with wings, that would
 have flown,
 But that his heavy rider kept him down.
 And from the palace came a child of sin,
 And took him by the curls, and led him in,
 Where sat a company with heated eyes,
 Expecting when a fountain should arise :
 A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—
 As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,
 Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and
 capes—
 Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid
 shapes,
 By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine,
 and piles of grapes.

II.

Then methought I heard a mellow sound ;
 Gathering up from all the lower ground ;

Narrowing in to where they sat assembled
 Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
 Wov'n in circles: they that heard it sigh'd,
 Panted hand-in-hand with faces pale,
 Swung themselves, and in low tones replied ;

Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
 Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail ;
 Then the music touch'd the gates and died ;
 Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
 Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale ;
 Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,

As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,
 The strong tempestuous treble throbb'd
 and palpitated ;

Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
 Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
 Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
 Flung the torrent rainbow round :
 Then they started from their places,
 Moved with violence, changed in hue,
 Caught each other with wild grimaces,
 Half-invisible to the view,
 Wheeling with precipitate paces
 To the melody, till they flew,
 Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,
 Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
 Like to Furies, like to Graces,
 Dash'd together in blinding dew :
 Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
 The nerve-dissolving melody
 Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

III.

And then I look'd up toward a mountain-
 tract,

That girt the region with high cliff and
 lawn :

I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
 Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
 God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
 Unheeded : and detaching, fold by fold,
 From those still heights, and, slowly
 drawing near,

A vapour heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
 Came floating on for many a month and
 year,

Unheeded : and I thought I would have
 spoken,

And warn'd that madman ere it grew too
 late :

But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine
 was broken,

When that cold vapour touch'd the palace
 gate,

And link'd again. I saw within my head
 A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as
 death,

Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
 And lighted at a ruin'd inn, and said :

IV.

' Wrinkled ostler, grim and thin !

Here is custom come your way ;
 Take my brute, and lead him in,
 Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

' Bitter barmaid, waning fast !

See that sheets are on my bed ;
 What ! the flower of life is past :
 It is long before you wed.

' Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,
 At the Dragon on the heath !

Let us have a quiet hour,
 Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

' I am old, but let me drink ;

Bring me spices, bring me wine ;
 I remember, when I think,
 That my youth was half divine.

Wine is good for shrivell'd lips,
 When a blanket wraps the day,
 When the rotten woodland drips,
 And the leaf is stamp'd in clay.

' Sit thee down, and have no shame,
 Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee ;
 What care I for any name ?
 What for order or degree ?

' Let me screw thee up a peg :
 Let me loose thy tongue with wine :
 Callest thou that thing a leg ?
 Which is thinnest ? thine or mine ?

' Thou shalt not be saved by works :
 Thou hast been a sinner too :
 Ruin'd trunks on wither'd forks,
 Empty scarecrows, I and you !

' Fill the cup, and fill the can :

Have a rouse before the morn :
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

' We are men of ruin'd blood ;
Therefore comes it we are wise.
Fish are we that love the mud,
Rising to no fancy-flies.

' Name and fame ! to fly sublime
Thro' the courts, the camps, the
schools,
Is to be the ball of Time,
Banded by the hands of fools.

' Friendship !—to be two in one—
Let the canting liar pack !
Well I know, when I am gone,
How she mouths behind my back.

' Virtue !—to be good and just—
Every heart, when sifted well,
Is a clot of warmer dust,
Mix'd with cunning sparks of hell.

' O ! we two as well can look
Whited thought and cleanly life
As the priest, above his book
Leering at his neighbour's wife.

' Fill the cup, and fill the can :
Have a rouse before the morn :
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

' Drink, and let the parties rave :
They are fill'd with idle spleen ;
Rising, falling, like a wave,
For they know not what they mean.

' He that roars for liberty
Faster binds a tyrant's power ;
And the tyrant's cruel glee
Forces on the freer hour.

' Fill the can, and fill the cup :
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

' Greet her with applausive breath,
Freedom, gaily doth she tread ;
In her right a civic wreath,
In her left a human head.

' No, I love not what is new ;
She is of an ancient house :
And I think we know the hue
Of that cap upon her brows.

' Let her go ! her thirst she slakes
Where the bloody conduit runs,
Then her sweetest meal she makes
On the first-born of her sons.

' Drink to lofty hopes that cool—
Visions of a perfect State :
Drink we, last, the public fool,
Frantic love and frantic hate.

' Chant me now some wicked stave,
Till thy drooping courage rise,
And the glow-worm of the grave
Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

' Fear not thou to loose thy tongue ;
Set thy hoary fancies free ;
What is loathsome to the young
Savours well to thee and me.

' Change, reverting to the years,
When thy nerves could understand
What there is in loving tears,
And the warmth of hand in hand.

' Tell me tales of thy first love—
April hopes, the fools of chance ;
Till the graves begin to move,
And the dead begin to dance.

' Fill the can, and fill the cup :
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

' Trooping from their mouldy dens
The chap-fallen circle spreads :
Welcome, fellow-citizens,
Hollow hearts and empty heads !

'You are bones, and what of that?
Every face, however full,
Padded round with flesh and fat,
Is but modell'd on a skull.

'Death is king, and Vivat Rex!
Tread a measure on the stones,
Madam—if I know your sex,
From the fashion of your bones.

'No, I cannot praise the fire
In your eye—nor yet your lip:
All the more do I admire
Joints of cunning workmanship.

'Lo! God's likeness—the ground-plan—
Neither modell'd, glazed, nor framed:
Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,
Far too naked to be shamed!

'Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
While we keep a little breath!
Drink to heavy Ignorance!
Hob-and-nob with brother Death!

'Thou art mazed, the night is long,
And the longer night is near:
What! I am not all as wrong
As a bitter jest is dear.

'Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,
When the locks are crisp and curl'd;
Unto me my maudlin gall
And my mockeries of the world.

'Fill the cup, and fill the can:
Mingle madness, mingle scorn!
Dregs of life, and lees of man:
Yet we will not die forlorn.'

v.

The voice grew faint: there came a
further change:
Once more uprose the mystic mountain-
range:
Below were men and horses pierced with
worms,
And slowly quickening into lower forms;
By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of
dross,
Old plash of rains, and refuse patch'd
with moss.

Then some one spake: 'Behold! it was
a crime
Of sense avenged by sense that wore with
time.'

Another said: 'The crime of sense
became

The crime of malice, and is equal blame.'

And one: 'He had not wholly quench'd
his power;

A little grain of conscience made him
sour.'

At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
To which an answer peal'd from that high
land,

But in a tongue no man could understand;
And on the glimmering limit far with-
drawn

God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

TO —,

AFTER READING A LIFE AND LETTERS.

'Cursed be he that moves my bones.'
Shakespeare's Epitaph.

You might have won the Poet's name,
If such be worth the winning now,
And gain'd a laurel for your brow
Of sounder leaf than I can claim;

But you have made the wiser choice,
A life that moves to gracious ends
Thro' troops of unrecording friends,
A deedful life, a silent voice:

And you have miss'd the irreverent doom
Of those that wear the Poet's crown:
Hereafter, neither knave nor clown
Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.

For now the Poet cannot die,
Nor leave his music as of old,
But round him ere he scarce be cold
Begins the scandal and the cry:

'Proclaim the faults he would not show:
Break lock and seal: betray the trust:
Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just
The many-headed beast should know.'

Ah shameless ! for he did but sing
 A song that pleased us from its worth ;
 No public life was his on earth,
 No blazon'd statesman he, nor king.

He gave the people of his best :
 His worst he kept, his best he gave.
 My Shakespeare's curse on clown and
 knave
 Who will not let his ashes rest !

Who make it seem more sweet to be
 The little life of bank and brier,
 The bird that pipes his lone desire
 And dies unheard within his tree,

Than he that warbles long and loud
 And drops at Glory's temple-gates,
 For whom the carrion vulture waits
 To tear his heart before the crowd !

TO E. L., ON HIS TRAVELS IN GREECE.

ILLYRIAN woodlands, echoing falls
 Of water, sheets of summer glass,
 The long divine Peneïan pass,
 The vast Akrokeraunian walls,

Tomohrit, Athos, all things fair,
 With such a pencil, such a pen,
 You shadow forth to distant men,
 I read and felt that I was there :

And trust me while I turn'd the page,
 And track'd you still on classic ground,
 I grew in gladness till I found
 My spirits in the golden age.

For me the torrent ever pour'd
 And glisten'd—here and there alone
 The broad-limb'd Gods at random
 thrown
 By fountain-urns ;—and Naiads oar'd

A glimmering shoulder under gloom
 Of cavern pillars ; on the swell
 The silver lily heaved and fell ;
 And many a slope was rich in bloom

From him that on the mountain lea
 By dancing rivulets fed his flocks
 To him who sat upon the rocks,
 And fluted to the morning sea.

BREAK, break, break,
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !
 And I would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
 That he shouts with his sister at play !
 O well for the sailor lad,
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill ;
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me.

THE POET'S SONG.

THE rain had fallen, the Poet arose,
 He pass'd by the town and out of the
 street,
 A light wind blew from the gates of the
 sun,
 And waves of shadow went over the
 wheat,
 And he sat him down in a lonely place,
 And chanted a melody loud and sweet,
 That made the wild-swan pause in her
 cloud,
 And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,
 The snake slipt under a spray,
 The wild hawk stood with the down on
 his beak,
 And stared, with his foot on the prey,
 And the nightingale thought, 'I have
 sung many songs,
 But never a one so gay,
 For he sings of what the world will be
 When the years have died away.'

ENOCH ARDEN

AND OTHER POEMS.

ENOCH ARDEN.

LONG lines of cliff breaking have left a
chasm ;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow
sands ;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster ; then a moulder'd church ; and
higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd
mill ;
And high in heaven behind it a gray down
With Danish barrows ; and a hazelwood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats up-
drawn ;
And built their castles of dissolving sand
To watch them overflow'd, or following up
And flying the white breaker, daily left
The little footprint daily wash'd away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff :
In this the children play'd at keeping
house.
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,
While Annie still was mistress ; but at
times
Enoch would hold possession for a week :
'This is my house and this my little wife.'
'Mine too' said Philip 'turn and turn
about :'
When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch stronger-
made

Was master : then would Philip, his blue
eyes
All flooded with the helpless wrath of
tears,
Shriek out 'I hate you, Enoch,' and at
this
The little wife would weep for company,
And pray them not to quarrel for her
sake,
And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood
past,
And the new warmth of life's ascending
sun
Was felt by either, either fixt his heart
On that one girl ; and Enoch spoke his
love,
But Philip loved in silence ; and the girl
Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him ;
But she loved Enoch ; tho' she knew it
not,
And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set
A purpose evermore before his eyes,
To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
To purchase his own boat, and make a
home
For Annie : and so prosper'd that at last
A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe
For leagues along that breaker-beaten
coast
Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a
year
On board a merchantman, and made
himself
Full sailor ; and he thrice had pluck'd a
life
From the dread sweep of the down-stream-
ing seas :
And all men look'd upon him favourably :
And ere he touch'd his one-and-twentieth
May

He purchased his own boat, and made a home
 For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up
 The narrow street that clamber'd toward
 the mill.

'Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
 The younger people making holiday,
 With bag and sack and basket, great and
 small,
 Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stay'd
 (His father lying sick and needing him)
 An hour behind; but as he climb'd the hill,
 Just where the prone edge of the wood
 began

To feather toward the hollow, saw the
 pair,
 Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
 His large gray eyes and weather-beaten
 face

All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
 That burn'd as on an altar. Philip look'd,
 And in their eyes and faces read his doom;
 Then, as their faces drew together,
 groan'd,

And slipt aside, and like a wounded life
 Crept down into the hollows of the wood;
 There, while the rest were loud in merry-
 making,

Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and
 past

Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang
 the bells,
 And merrily ran the years, seven happy
 years,
 Seven happy years of health and com-
 petence,

And mutual love and honourable toil;
 With children; first a daughter. In him
 woke,

With his first babe's first cry, the noble
 wish

To save all earnings to the uttermost,
 And give his child a better bringing-up
 Than his had been, or hers; a wish re-
 new'd,

When two years after came a boy to be
 The rosy idol of her solitudes,

While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
 Or often journeying landward; for in truth
 Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-
 spoil

In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
 Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter
 gales,

Not only to the market-cross were known,
 But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
 Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
 And peacock-yewtree of the lonely Hall,
 Whose Friday fare was Enoch's minister-
 ing.

Then came a change, as all things
 human change.

Ten miles to northward of the narrow port
 Open'd a larger haven: thither used
 Enoch at times to go by land or sea;
 And once when there, and clambering on
 a mast

In harbour, by mischance he slipt and
 fell:

A limb was broken when they lifted
 him;

And while he lay recovering there, his
 wife

Bore him another son, a sickly one:
 Another hand crept too across his trade
 Taking her bread and theirs: and on him
 fell,

Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing
 man,

Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.
 He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the night,
 To see his children leading evermore
 Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
 And her, he loved, a beggar: then he
 pray'd

'Save them from this, whatever comes to
 me.'

And while he pray'd, the master of that
 ship

Enoch had served in, hearing his mis-
 chance,

Came, for he knew the man and valued
 him,

Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
 And wanting yet a boatswain. Would
 he go?

There yet were many weeks before she
sail'd,
Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch
have the place?
And Enoch all at once assented to it,
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance
appear'd
No graver than as when some little cloud
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
And isles a light in the offing: yet the
wife—
When he was gone—the children—what
to do?
Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his
plans;
To sell the boat—and yet he loved her
well—
How many a rough sea had he weather'd
in her!
He knew her, as a horseman knows his
horse—
And yet to sell her—then with what she
brought
Buy goods and stores—set Annie forth
in trade
With all that seamen needed or their
wives—
So might she keep the house while he
was gone.
Should he not trade himself out yonder?
go
This voyage more than once? yea twice
or thrice—
As oft as needed—last, returning rich,
Become the master of a larger craft,
With fuller profits lead an easier life,
Have all his pretty young ones educated,
And pass his days in peace among his
own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:
Then moving homeward came on Annie
pale,
Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.
Forward she started with a happy cry,
And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
Whom Enoch took, and handled all his
limbs,

Appraised his weight and fondled father-
like,
But had no heart to break his purposes
To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring
had girt
Her finger, Annie fought against his will:
Yet not with brawling opposition she,
But manifold entreaties, many a tear,
Many a sad kiss by day by night renew'd
(Sure that all evil would come out of it)
Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
For her or his dear children, not to go.
He not for his own self caring but her,
Her and her children, let her plead in vain;
So grieving held his will, and bore it thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-
friend,
Bought Annie goods and stores, and set
his hand
To fit their little streetward sitting-room
With shelf and corner for the goods and
stores.
So all day long till Enoch's last at home,
Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and
axe,
Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to
hear
Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd
and rang,
Till this was ended, and his careful
hand,—
The space was narrow,—having order'd
all
Almost as neat and close as Nature packs
Her blossom or her seedling, paused;
and he,
Who needs would work for Annie to the
last,
Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of fare-
well
Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,
Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to
him.
Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man
Bow'd himself down, and in that mystery

Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,

Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and babes
Whatever came to him : and then he said
'Annie, this voyage by the grace of God
Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me,
For I'll be back, my girl, before you
know it.'

Then lightly rocking baby's cradle 'and
he,

This pretty, puny, weakly little one,—
Nay—for I love him all the better for it—
God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees
And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,
And make him merry, when I come home
again.

Come, Annie, come, cheer up before I go.'

Him running on thus hopefully she
heard,

And almost hoped herself; but when he
turn'd

The current of his talk to graver things
In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing
On providence and trust in Heaven, she
heard,

Heard and not heard him ; as the village
girl,

Who sets her pitcher underneath the
spring,

Musing on him that used to fill it for her,
Hears and not hears, and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke 'O Enoch, you
are wise ;

And yet for all your wisdom well know I
That I shall look upon your face no more.'

'Well then,' said Enoch, 'I shall look
on yours.

Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
(He named the day) get you a seaman's
glass,

Spy out my face, and laugh at all your
fears.'

But when the last of those last moments
came,

'Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
Look to the babes, and till I come again

Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
And fear no more for me ; or if you fear
Cast all your cares on God ; that anchor
holds.

Is He not yonder in those uttermost
Parts of the morning ? if I flee to these
Can I go from Him ? and the sea is His,
The sea is His : He made it.'

Enoch rose,
Cast his strong arms about his drooping
wife,

And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones ;
But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
After a night of feverous wakefulness,
When Annie would have raised him
Enoch said

'Wake him not ; let him sleep ; how
should the child

Remember this ?' and kiss'd him in his
cot.

But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt
A tiny curl, and gave it : this he kept
Thro' all his future ; but now hastily
caught

His bundle, waved his hand, and went
his way.

She when the day, that Enoch
mention'd, came,
Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain : perhaps
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye ;
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous ;
She saw him not : and while he stood on
deck

Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
She watch'd it, and departed weeping for
him ;

Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his
grave,

Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
But throve not in her trade, not being bred
To barter, nor compensating the want
By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
And still foreboding 'what would Enoch
say ?'

For more than once, in days of difficulty

And pressure, had she sold her wares for
less
Than what she gave in buying what she
sold :
She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it ; and
thus,
Expectant of that news which never came,
Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,
And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born
and grew
Yet sicklier, tho' the mother cared for it
With all a mother's care : nevertheless,
Whether her business often call'd her from
it,
Or thro' the want of what it needed most,
Or means to pay the voice who best could
tell
What most it needed—howsoe'er it was,
After a lingering,—ere she was aware,—
Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried
it,
Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her
peace
(Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon
her),
Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.
'Surely,' said Philip, 'I may see her now,
May be some little comfort ;' therefore
went,
Past thro' the solitary room in front,
Paused for a moment at an inner door,
Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
Enter'd ; but Annie, seated with her grief,
Fresh from the burial of her little one,
Cared not to look on any human face,
But turn'd her own toward the wall and
wept.

Then Philip standing up said falteringly
'Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.'

He spoke ; the passion in her moan'd
reply
'Favour from one so sad and so forlorn
As I am !' half abash'd him ; yet unask'd,
His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
He set himself beside her, saying to her :

'I came to speak to you of what he
wish'd,
Enoch, your husband : I have ever said
You chose the best among us—a strong
man :

For where he fixt his heart he set his hand
To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.
And wherefore did he go this weary way,
And leave you lonely? not to see the
world—

For pleasure?—nay, but for the where-
withal

To give his babes a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or yours : that was
his wish.

And if he come again, vext will he be
To find the precious morning hours were
lost.

And it would vex him even in his grave,
If he could know his babes were running
wild

Like colts about the waste. So, Annie,
now—

Have we not known each other all our
lives?

I do beseech you by the love you bear
Him and his children not to say me nay—
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
Why then he shall repay me—if you will,
Annie—for I am rich and well-to-do.
Now let me put the boy and girl to school :
This is the favour that I came to ask.'

Then Annie with her brows against the
wall

Answer'd 'I cannot look you in the face,
I seem so foolish and so broken down.
When you came in my sorrow broke me
down ;

And now I think your kindness breaks
me down ;

But Enoch lives ; that is borne in on me :
He will repay you : money can be repaid ;
Not kindness such as yours.'

And Philip ask'd
'Then you will let me, Annie?'

There she turn'd,
She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon
him,

And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
 Then calling down a blessing on his head
 Caught at his hand, and wrung it passion-
 ately,
 And past into the little garth beyond.
 So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to
 school,
 And bought them needful books, and
 everyway,
 Like one who does his duty by his own,
 Made himself theirs ; and tho' for Annie's
 sake,
 Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,
 He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,
 And seldom crost her threshold, yet he
 sent
 Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and
 fruit,
 The late and early roses from his wall,
 Or conies from the down, and now and
 then,
 With some pretext of fineness in the meal
 To save the offence of charitable, flour
 From his tall mill that whistled on the
 waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's
 mind ;
 Scarce could the woman when he came
 upon her,
 Out of full heart and boundless gratitude
 Light on a broken word to thank him
 with.
 But Philip was her children's all-in-all ;
 From distant corners of the street they
 ran
 To greet his hearty welcome heartily ;
 Lords of his house and of his mill were
 they ;
 Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs
 Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd with
 him
 And call'd him Father Philip. Philip
 gain'd
 As Enoch lost ; for Enoch seem'd to them
 Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
 Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
 Down at the far end of an avenue,

Going we know not where : and so ten
 years,
 Since Enoch left his hearth and native
 land,
 Fled forward, and no news of Enoch
 came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children
 long'd
 To go with others, nutting to the wood,
 And Annie would go with them ; then
 they begg'd
 For Father Philip (as they call'd him) too :
 Him, like the working bee in blossom-
 dust,
 Blanch'd with his mill, they found ; and
 saying to him
 ' Come with us Father Philip ' he denied ;
 But when the children pluck'd at him to
 go,
 He laugh'd, and yielded readily to their
 wish,
 For was not Annie with them ? and they
 went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
 Just where the prone edge of the wood
 began
 To feather toward the hollow, all her force
 Fail'd her ; and sighing, ' Let me rest ' she
 said :
 So Philip rested with her well-content ;
 While all the younger ones with jubilant
 cries
 Broke from their elders, and tumultuously
 Down thro' the whitening hazels made a
 plunge
 To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent
 or broke
 The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away
 Their tawny clusters, crying to each other
 And calling, here and there, about the
 wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
 Her presence, and remember'd one dark
 hour
 Here in this wood, when like a wounded
 life
 He crept into the shadow : at last he said,

Lifting his honest forehead, 'Listen,
Annie,
How merry they are down yonder in the
wood.
Tired, Annie?' for she did not speak a
word.
'Tired?' but her face had fall'n upon her
hands;
At which, as with a kind of anger in him,
'The ship was lost,' he said, 'the ship
was lost!
No more of that! why should you kill
yourself
And make them orphans quite?' And
Annie said
'I thought not of it: but—I know not
why—
Their voices make me feel so solitary.'

Then Philip coming somewhat closer
spoke.
'Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,
That tho' I know not when it first came
there,
I know that it will out at last. O Annie,
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,
That he who left you ten long years ago
Should still be living; well then—let me
speak:
I grieve to see you poor and wanting help:
I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless—they say that women are so
quick—
Perhaps you know what I would have
you know—
I wish you for my wife. I fain would
prove
A father to your children: I do think
They love me as a father: I am sure
That I love them as if they were mine
own;
And I believe, if you were fast my wife,
That after all these sad uncertain years,
We might be still as happy as God
grants
To any of his creatures. Think upon it:
For I am well-to-do—no kin, no care,
No burthen, save my care for you and
yours:

And we have known each other all our
lives,
And I have loved you longer than you
know.'

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she
spoke:
'You have been as God's good angel in
our house.
God bless you for it, God reward you for
it,
Philip, with something happier than my-
self.
Can one love twice? can you be ever
loved
As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?'
'I am content' he answer'd 'to be loved
A little after Enoch.' 'O' she cried,
Scared as it were, 'dear Philip, wait a
while:
If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not
come—
Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
Surely I shall be wiser in a year:
O wait a little!' Philip sadly said
'Annie, as I have waited all my life
I well may wait a little.' 'Nay' she
cried
'I am bound: you have my promise—in
a year:
Will you not bide your year as I bide
mine?'
And Philip answer'd 'I will bide my
year.'

Here both were mute, till Philip glanc-
ing up
Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day
Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;
Then fearing night and chill for Annie,
rose
And sent his voice beneath him thro' the
wood.
Up came the children laden with their
spoil;
Then all descended to the port, and there
At Annie's door he paused and gave his
hand,
Saying gently 'Annie, when I spoke to
you,

That was your hour of weakness. I was
wrong,
I am always bound to you, but you are
free.'
Then Annie weeping answer'd 'I am
bound.'

She spoke; and in one moment as it
were,
While yet she went about her household
ways,

Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she
knew,

That autumn into autumn flash'd again,
And there he stood once more before her
face,

Claiming her promise. 'Is it a year?'
she ask'd.

'Yes, if the nuts' he said 'be ripe again :
Come out and see.' But she—she put
him off—

So much to look to—such a change—a
month—

Give her a month—she knew that she was
bound—

A month—no more. Then Philip with
his eyes

Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
'Take your own time, Annie, take your
own time.'

And Annie could have wept for pity of
him ;

And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,
Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,
Till half-another year had slipt away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle
with her ;

Some that she but held off to draw him on ;
And others laugh'd at her and Philip too,
As simple folk that knew not their own
minds,

And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly

Would hint at worse in either. Her own
son

Was silent, tho' he often look'd his wish ;
But evermore the daughter prest upon her
To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty ;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan ; and all these things
fell on her
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly
Pray'd for a sign 'my Enoch is he gone ?'
Then compass'd round by the blind wall
of night

Brook'd not the expectant terror of her
heart,

Started from bed, and struck herself a
light,

Then desperately seized the holy Book,
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,
Suddenly put her finger on the text,
'Under the palm-tree.' That was nothing
to her :

No meaning there : she closed the Book
and slept :

When lo ! her Enoch sitting on a height,
Under a palm-tree, over him the Sun :

'He is gone,' she thought, 'he is happy,
he is singing

Hosanna in the highest : yonder shines
The Sun of Righteousness, and these be
palms

Whereof the happy people strowing cried
"Hosanna in the highest!" Here she
woke,

Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to
him

'There is no reason why we should not
wed.'

'Then for God's sake,' he answer'd, 'both
our sakes,

So you will wed me, let it be at once.'

So these were wed and merrily rang the
bells,

Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.

A footstep seem'd to fall beside her path,

She knew not whence ; a whisper on her
ear,
She knew not what ; nor loved she to be left
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ail'd her then, that ere she enter'd,
often
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
Fearing to enter : Philip thought he knew :
Such doubts and fears were common to
her state,
Being with child : but when her child was
born,
Then her new child was as herself renew'd,
Then the new mother came about her
heart,
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,
And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch ? prosperously
sail'd
The ship ' Good Fortune,' tho' at setting
forth
The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward,
shook
And almost overwhelm'd her, yet unvext
She slipt across the summer of the world,
Then after a long tumble about the Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,
She passing thro' the summer world again,
The breath of heaven came continually
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and
bought
Quaint monsters for the market of those
times,
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage : at first
indeed
Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her
bows :
Then follow'd calms, and then winds
variable,
Then baffling, a long course of them ; and
last
Storm, such as drove her under moonless
heavens

Till hard upon the cry of ' breakers' came
The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the
night,
Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken
spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing
roots ;
Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge
They built, and thatch'd with leaves of
palm, a hut,
Half hut, half native cavern. So the
three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than
boy,
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and
wreck,
Lay lingering out a five-years' death-in-
life.
They could not leave him. After he was
gone,
The two remaining found a fallen stem ;
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
Firé-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
In those two deaths he read God's warn-
ing ' wait.'

The mountain wooded to the peak, the
lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to
Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of
plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems, and
ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,
All these he saw ; but what he fain had
seen

He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,

The moving whisper of huge trees that
branch'd

And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
As down the shore he ranged, or all day
long

Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail :
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices ;
The blaze upon the waters to the east ;
The blaze upon his island overhead ;
The blaze upon the waters to the west ;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollow-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to
watch,
So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom made of many phantoms
moved
Before him haunting him, or he himself
Moved haunting people, things and places,
known
Far in a darker isle beyond the line ;
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small
house,
The climbing street, the mill, the leafy
lanes,
The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the
chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming
downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying
leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his
ears,
Tho' faintly, merrily—far and far away—
He heard the pealing of his parish bells ;

Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started
up

Shuddering, and when the beauteous
hateful isle

Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being every-
where

Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem
all alone,

Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and
went

Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,
Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely
doom

Came suddenly to an end. Another ship
(She wanted water) blown by baffling
winds,

Like the Good Fortune, from her destined
course,

Stay'd by this isle, not knowing where
she lay :

For since the mate had seen at early dawn
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle
The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away
In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the
shores

With clamour. Downward from his
mountain gorge

Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely
clad,

Muttering and mumbling, idiotlike it
seem'd,

With inarticulate rage, and making signs
They knew not what : and yet he led the
way

To where the rivulets of sweet water ran ;
And ever as he mingled with the crew,
And heard them talking, his long-bounden
tongue

Was loosen'd, till he made them under-
stand ;

Whom, when their casks were fill'd they
took aboard :

And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,

Scarce-credited at first but more and more,
 Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it:
 And clothes they gave him and free passage home;
 But oft he work'd among the rest and shook
 His isolation from him. None of these
 Came from his country, or could answer him,
 If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.
 And dull the voyage was with long delays,
 The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore
 His fancy fled before the lazy wind
 Returning, till beneath a clouded moon
 He like a lover down thro' all his blood
 Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath
 Of England, blown across her ghostly wall:
 And that same morning officers and men
 Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
 Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it:
 Then moving up the coast they landed him,
 Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,
 But homeward—home—what home? had he a home?
 His home, he walk'd. Bright was that afternoon,
 Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either chasm,
 Where either haven open'd on the deeps,
 Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the world in gray;
 Cut off the length of highway on before,
 And left but narrow breadth to left and right
 Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.
 On the nigh-naked tree the robin piped
 Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping haze
 The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down:
 Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom;
 Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted light
 Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slowly stolen,
 His heart foreshadowing all calamity,
 His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home
 Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes
 In those far-off seven happy years were born;
 But finding neither light nor murmur there
 (A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle) crept
 Still downward thinking 'dead or dead to me!'

Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,
 Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
 A front of timber-crost antiquity,
 So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
 He thought it must have gone; but he was gone
 Who kept it; and his widow Miriam Lane,
 With daily-dwindling profits held the house;
 A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now
 Stiller, with yet a bed for wandering men.
 There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,
 Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
 Told him, with other annals of the port,
 Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so bow'd,
 So broken—all the story of his house.
 His baby's death, her growing poverty,
 How Philip put her little ones to school,
 And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
 Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth
 Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance
 No shadow past, nor motion: any one,
 Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the tale
 Less than the teller: only when she closed
 'Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost'.

He, shaking his gray head pathetically,
Repeated muttering 'cast away and lost ;'
Again in deeper inward whispers 'lost !'

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face
again ;

'If I might look on her sweet face again
And know that she is happy.' So the
thought

Haunted and harass'd him, and drove
him forth,

At evening when the dull November day
Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
There he sat down gazing on all below ;
There did a thousand memories roll upon
him,

Unspeakable for sadness. By and by
The ruddy square of comfortable light,
Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's
house,

Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes
Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the
street,

The latest house to landward ; but be-
hind,

With one small gate that open'd on the
waste,

Flourish'd a little garden square and
wall'd :

And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk
Of shingle, and a walk divided it :

But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk and
stole

Up by the wall, behind the yew ; and
thence

That which he better might have shunn'd,
if griefs

Like his have worse or better, Enoch
saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd
board

Sparkled and shone ; so genial was the
hearth :

And on the right hand of the hearth he
saw

Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,

Stout, rosy, with his babe across his
knees ;

And o'er her second father stoopt a girl,
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted
hand

Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy
arms,

Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they
laugh'd ;

And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
The mother glancing often toward her
babe,

But turning now and then to speak with
him,

Her son, who stood beside her tall and
strong,

And saying that which pleased him, for
he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life
beheld

His wife his wife no more, and saw the
babe

Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the
happiness,

And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's
love,—

Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him
all,

Because things seen are mightier than
things heard,

Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch
and fear'd

To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of
doom,

Would shatter all the happiness of the
hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate under-
foot,

And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be
found,

Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

'Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too! must I not speak to these?
They know me not. I should betray myself.
Never: No father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.'

There speech and thought and nature fail'd a little,
And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
'Not to tell her, never to let her know.'

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. 'This miller's wife'
He said to Miriam 'that you spoke about,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?'

'Ay, ay, poor soul' said Miriam, 'fear enow!
If you could tell her you had seen him dead,
Why, that would be her comfort;' and he thought
'After the Lord has call'd me she shall know,
I wait His time,' and Enoch set himself,
Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live.
Almost to all things could he turn his hand.
Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or help'd
At lading and unlading the tall barks,
That brought the stunted commerce of those days;
Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself:
Yet since he did but labour for himself,
Work without hope, there was not life in it
Whereby the man could live; and as the year
Roll'd itself round again to meet the day
When Enoch had return'd, a languor came
Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
Weakening the man, till he could do no more,
But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.
And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully.
For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck
See thro' the gray skirts of a lifting squall
The boat that bears the hope of life approach
To save the life despair'd of, than he saw
Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kinder hope
On Enoch thinking 'after I am gone,
Then may she learn I lov'd her to the last.'
He call'd aloud for Miriam Lane and said
'Woman, I have a secret—only swear,
Before I tell you—swear upon the book
Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.'

‘Dead,’ clamour’d the good woman, ‘hear him talk !
 I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round.’
 ‘Swear’ added Enoch sternly ‘on the book.’
 And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam swore.
 Then Enoch rolling his gray eyes upon her,
 ‘Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?’
 ‘Know him?’ she said ‘I knew him far away.
 Ay, ay, I mind him coming down the street ;
 Held his head high, and cared for no man, he.’
 Slowly and sadly Enoch answer’d her ;
 ‘His head is low, and no man cares for him.
 I think I have not three days more to live ;
 I am the man.’ At which the woman gave
 A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.
 ‘You Arden, you ! nay,—sure he was a foot
 Higher than you be.’ Enoch said again
 ‘My God has bow’d me down to what I am ;
 My grief and solitude have broken me ;
 Nevertheless, know you that I am he
 Who married—but that name has twice
 been changed—
 I married her who married Philip Ray.
 Sit, listen.’ Then he told her of his voyage,
 His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back,
 His gazing in on Annie, his resolve,
 And how he kept it. As the woman heard,
 Fast flow’d the current of her easy tears,
 While in her heart she yearn’d incessantly
 To rush abroad all round the little haven,
 Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes ;
 But awed and promise-bounden she forbore,
 Saying only ‘See your bairns before you go !
 Eh, let me fetch ’em, Arden,’ and arose
 Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung
 A moment on her words, but then replied :

‘Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
 But let me hold my purpose till I die.
 Sit down again ; mark me and understand,
 While I have power to speak. I charge you now,
 When you shall see her, tell her that I died
 Blessing her, praying for her, loving her ;
 Save for the bar between us, loving her
 As when she laid her head beside my own.
 And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
 So like her mother, that my latest breath
 Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.
 And tell my son that I died blessing him.
 And say to Philip that I blest him too ;
 He never meant us any thing but good.
 But if my children care to see me dead,
 Who hardly knew me living, let them come,
 I am their father ; but she must not come,
 For my dead face would vex her after-life.
 And now there is but one of all my blood
 Who will embrace me in the world-to-be :
 This hair is his : she cut it off and gave it,
 And I have borne it with me all these years.
 And thought to bear it with me to my grave ;
 But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him,
 My babe in bliss : wherefore when I am gone,
 Take, give her this, for it may comfort her :
 It will moreover be a token to her,
 That I am he.’

He ceased ; and Miriam Lane
 Made such a voluble answer promising all,
 That once again he roll’d his eyes upon her
 Repeating all he wish’d, and once again
 She promised.

Then the third night after this,
 While Enoch slumber’d motionless and pale,
 And Miriam watch’d and dozed at intervals,

There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms
abroad

Crying with a loud voice 'A sail! a sail!
I am saved;' and so fell back and spoke
no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

THE BROOK.

HERE, by this brook, we parted; I to the
East

And he for Italy—too late—too late:
One whom the strong sons of the world
despise;

For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and
share,

And mellow metres more than cent for
cent;

Nor could he understand how money
breeds,

Thought it a dead thing; yet himself
could make

The thing that is not as the thing that
is.

O had he lived! In our schoolbooks we
say,

Of those that held their heads above the
crowd,

They flourish'd then or then; but life in
him

Could scarce be said to flourish, only
touch'd

On such a time as goes before the leaf,
When all the wood stands in a mist of
green,

And nothing perfect: yet the brook he
loved,

For which, in branding summers of
Bengal,

Or ev'n the sweet half-English Neilgherry
air

I panted, seems, as I re-listen to it,
Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
To me that loved him; for 'O brook,'

• he says,

'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his
rhyme,

'Whence come you?' and the brook, why
not? replies.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

'Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite
worn out,

Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley
bridge,

It has more ivy; there the river; and there
Stands Philip's farm where brook and
river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

'But Philip chatter'd more than brook
or bird;

Old Philip; all about the fields you caught
His weary daylong chirping, like the dry
High-elbow'd grigs that leap in summer
grass.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel.

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

‘O darling Katie Willows, his one
child !
A maiden of our century, yet most meek ;
A daughter of our meadows, yet not
coarse ;
Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand ;
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the
shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

‘Sweet Katie, once I did her a good
turn,
Her and her far-off cousin and betrothed,
James Willows, of one name and heart
with her.
For here I came, twenty years back—the
week
Before I parted with poor Edmund ; crost
By that old bridge which, half in ruins
then,
Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam
Beyond it, where the waters marry—crost,
Whistling a random bar of Bonny Doon,
And push’d at Philip’s garden-gate. The
gate,
Half-parted from a weak and scolding
hinge,
Stuck ; and he clamour’d from a case-
ment, “Run”
To Katie somewhere in the walks below,
“Run, Katie !” Katie never ran : she
moved
To meet me, winding under woodbine
bowers,
A little flutter’d, with her eyelids down,
Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon.

‘What was it ? less of sentiment than
sense
Had Katie ; not illiterate ; nor of those
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouth’d philan-
thropies,
Divorce the Feeling from her mate the
Deed.

‘She told me. She and James had
quarrell’d. Why ?
What cause of quarrel ? None, she said,
no cause ;
James had no cause : but when I prest
the cause,
I learnt that James had flickering jea-
lousies
Which anger’d her. Who anger’d James ?
I said.
But Katie snatch’d her eyes at once from
mine,
And sketching with her slender pointed
foot
Some figure like a wizard pentagram
On garden gravel, let my query pass
Unclaim’d, in flushing silence, till I ask’d
If James were coming. “Coming every
day,”
She answer’d, “ever longing to explain,
But evermore her father came across
With some long-winded tale, and broke
him short ;
And James departed vexed with him and
her.”
How could I help her ? “Would I—was
it wrong ?”
(Claspt hands and that petitionary grace
Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she
spoke)
“O would I take her father for one hour,
For one half-hour, and let him talk to me !”
And even while she spoke, I saw where
James
Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,
Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-
sweet.

‘O Katie, what I suffer’d for your sake !
For in I went, and call’d old Philip out
To show the farm : full willingly he rose :
He led me thro’ the short sweet-smelling
lanes
Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went.
He praised his land, his horses, his
machines ;
He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs,
his dogs ;
He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-
hens ;

His pigeons, who in session on their roofs
Approved him, bowing at their own
deserts :

Then from the plaintive mother's teat he
took

Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming
each,

And naming those, his friends, for whom
they were :

Then crost the common into Darnley
chase

To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse
and fern

Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.

Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech,

He pointed out a pasturing colt, and
said :

"That was the four-year-old I sold the
Squire."

And there he told a long long-winded tale
Of how the Squire had seen the colt at
grass,

And how it was the thing his daughter
wish'd,

And how he sent the bailiff to the farm

To learn the price, and what the price he
ask'd,

And how the bailiff swore that he was
mad,

But he stood firm ; and so the matter
hung ;

He gave them line : and five days after
that

He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,
Who then and there had offer'd something
more,

But he stood firm ; and so the matter
hung ;

He knew the man ; the colt would fetch
its price ;

He gave them line : and how by chance
at last

(It might be May or April, he forgot,

The last of April or the first of May)

He found the bailiff riding by the farm,

And, talking from the point, he drew
him in,

And there he mellow'd all his heart with
ale,

Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.

'Then, while I breathed in sight of
haven, he,

Poor fellow, could he help it? recom-
menced,

And ran thro' all the coltish chronicle,
Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho,
Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the
Jilt,

Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,
Till, not to die a listener, I arose,

And with me Philip, talking still ; and so
We turn'd our foreheads from the falling
sun,

And following our own shadows thrice
as long

As when they follow'd us from Philip's
door,

Arrived, and found the sun of sweet con-
tent

Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all things
well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,

I slide by hazel covers ;

I move the sweet forget-me-nots

That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,

Among my skimming swallows ;

I make the netted sunbeam dance

Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars

In brambly wildernesses ;

I linger by my shingly bars ;

I loiter round my cresses ;

And out again I curve and flow

To join the brimming river,

For men may come and men may go,

But I go on for ever.

Yes, men may come and go ; and these
are gone,

All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund,
sleeps,

Not by the well-known stream and rustic
spire,

But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome
Of Brunelleschi ; sleeps in peace : and he,
Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of
words

Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb :

I scraped the lichen from it : Katie walks
By the long wash of Australasian seas
Far off, and holds her head to other stars,
And breathes in April-autumns. All
are gone.'

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile
In the long hedge, and rolling in his
mind
Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the
brook

A tonsured head in middle age forlorn,
Mused, and was mute. On a sudden a
low breath

Of tender air made tremble in the
hedge

The fragile bindweed-bells and briony
rings ;

And he look'd up. There stood a maiden
near,

Waiting to pass. In much amaze he
stared

On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the
shell

Divides threefold to show the fruit with-
in :

Then, wondering, ask'd her 'Are you
from the farm ?'

'Yes' answer'd she. 'Pray stay a little :
pardon me ;

What do they call you ?' 'Katie.' 'That
were strange.

What surname ?' 'Willows.' 'No !'
'That is my name.'

'Indeed !' and here he look'd so self-
perplexed,

That Katie laugh'd, and laughing blush'd,
till he

Laugh'd also, but as one before he
wakes,

Who feels a glimmering strangeness in
his dream.

Then looking at her ; 'Too happy, fresh
and fair,

Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best
bloom,

To be the ghost of one who bore your
name

About these meadows, twenty years ago.'

'Have you not heard ?' said Katie,
'we came back.

We bought the farm we tenanted before.
Am I so like her ? so they said on board.
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
My mother, as it seems you did, the days
That most she loves to talk of, come
with me.

My brother James is in the harvest-field :
But she—you will be welcome—O, come
in !'

AYLMER'S FIELD.

1793.

DUST are our frames ; and, gilded dust,
our pride

Looks only for a moment whole and
sound ;

Like that long-buried body of the king,
Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
Which at a touch of light, an air of
heaven,

Slipt into ashes, and was found no more.

Here is a story which in rougher shape
Came from a grizzled cripple, whom I
saw

Sunning himself in a waste field alone—
Old, and a mine of memories—who had
served,

Long since, a bygone Rector of the place,
And been himself a part of what he told.

SIR AYLME AYLMER, that almighty
man,

The county God—in whose capacious
hall,

Hung with a hundred shields, the family
tree

Sprang from the midriff of a prostrate
king—

Whose blazing wyvern weathercock'd the
spire,

Stood from his walls and wing'd his entry-
gates

And swang besides on many a windy
sign—

Whose eyes from under a pyramidal head

Saw from his windows nothing save his
own—
What lovelier of his own had he than
her,
His only child, his Edith, whom he loved
As heiress and not heir regretfully?
But 'he that marries her marries her
name'
This fiat somewhat soothed himself and
wife,
His wife a faded beauty of the Baths,
Inspid as the Queen upon a card;
Her all of thought and bearing hardly
more
Than his own shadow in a sickly sun.

A land of hops and poppy-mingled
corn,
Little about it stirring save a brook!
A sleepy land, where under the same
wheel
The same old rut would deepen year by
year;
Where almost all the village had one
name;
Where Aylmer followed Aylmer at the
Hall
And Averill Averill at the Rectory
Thrice over; so that Rectory and Hall,
Bound in an immemorial intimacy,
Were open to each other; tho' to dream
That Love could bind them closer well
had made
The hoar hair of the Baronet bristle up
With horror, worse than had he heard
his priest
Preach an inverted scripture, sons of men
Daughters of God; so sleepy was the
land.

And might not Averill, had he will'd
it so,
Somewhere beneath his own low range
of roofs,
Have also set his many-shielded tree?
There was an Aylmer-Averill marriage
once.
When the red rose was redder than itself,
And York's white rose as red as Lancaster's,

With wounded peace which each had
prick'd to death.
'Not proven' Averill said, or laughingly
'Some other race of Averills'—prov'n
or no,
What cared he? what, if other or the
same?
He lean'd not on his fathers but himself.
But Leolin, his brother, living oft
With Averill, and a year or two before
Call'd to the bar, but ever call'd away
By one low voice to one dear neighbour-
hood,
Would often, in his walks with Edith,
claim
A distant kinship to the gracious blood
That shook the heart of Edith hearing
him.

Sanguine he was: a but less vivid hue
Than of that islet in the chestnut-bloom
Flamed in his cheek; and eager eyes,
that still
Took joyful note of all things joyful,
beam'd,
Beneath a manelike mass of rolling gold,
Their best and brightest, when they dwelt
on hers,
Edith, whose pensive beauty, perfect else,
But subject to the season or the mood,
Shone like a mystic star between the less
And greater glory varying to and fro,
We know not wherefore; bounteously
made,
And yet so finely, that a troublous touch
Thinn'd, or would seem 'to thin her in a
day,
A joyous to dilate, as toward the light.
And these had been together from the
first.
Leolin's first nurse was, five years after,
hers:
So much the boy foreran; but when his
date
Doubled her own, for want of playmates,
he
(Since Averill was a decad and a half
His elder, and their parents underground)
Had tost his ball and flown his kite, and
roll'd

His hoop to pleasure Edith, with her dipt
 Against the rush of the air in the prone
 swing,
 Made blossom-ball or daisy-chain, ar-
 ranged
 Her garden, sow'd her name and kept it
 green
 In living letters, told her fairy-tales,
 Show'd her the fairy footings on the
 grass,
 The little dells of cowslip, fairy palms,
 The petty marestail forest, fairy pines,
 Or from the tiny pitted target blew
 What look'd a flight of fairy arrows aim'd
 All at one mark, all hitting: make-be-
 lieves
 For Edith and himself: or else he forged,
 But that was later, boyish histories
 Of battle, bold adventure, dungeon,
 wreck,
 Flights, terrors, sudden rescues, and true
 love
 Crown'd after trial; sketches rude and
 faint,
 But where a passion yet unborn perhaps
 Lay hidden as the music of the moon
 Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.
 And thus together, save for college-times
 Or Temple-eaten terms, a couple, fair
 As ever painter painted, poet sang,
 Or Heaven in lavish bounty moulded,
 grew.
 And more and more, the maiden woman-
 grown,
 He wasted hours with Averill; there,
 when first
 The tented winter-field was broken up
 Into that phalanx of the summer spears
 That soon should wear the garland; there
 again
 When burr and bine were gather'd;
 lastly there
 At Christmas; ever welcome at the Hall,
 On whose dull sameness his full tide of
 youth
 Broke with a phosphorescence charming
 even
 My lady; and the Baronet yet had laid
 No bar between them: dull and self-
 involved,

Tall and erect, but bending from his
 height
 With half-allowing smiles for all the
 world,
 And mighty courteous in the main—his
 pride
 Lay deeper than to wear it as his ring—
 He, like an Aylmer in his Aylmerism,
 Would care no more for Leolin's walking
 with her
 Than for his old Newfoundland's, when
 they ran
 To loose him at the stables, for he rose
 Twofooted at the limit of his chain,
 Roaring to make a third: and how should
 Love,
 Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-
 met eyes
 Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
 Such dear familiarities of dawn?
 Seldom, but when he does, Master of all

So these young hearts not knowing that
 they loved,
 Not she at least, nor conscious of a bar
 Between them, nor by plight or broken
 ring
 Bound, but an immemorial intimacy,
 Wander'd at will, and oft accompanied
 By Averill: his, a brother's love, that
 hung
 With wings of brooding shelter o'er her
 peace,
 Might have been other, save for Leolin's—
 Who knows? but so they wander'd, hour
 by hour
 Gather'd the blossom that rebloom'd, and
 drank
 The magic cup that fill'd itself anew.

A whisper half reveal'd her to herself.
 For out beyond her lodges, where the
 brook
 Vocal, with here and there a silence, ran
 By sallowy rims, arose the labourers'
 homes,
 A frequent haunt of Edith, on low knolls
 That dimpling died into each other, huts
 At random scatter'd, each a nest in
 bloom.

Her art, her hand, her counsel all had wrought
 About them : here was one that, summer-blanch'd,
 Was parcel-bearded with the traveller's-joy
 In Autumn, parcel ivy-clad ; and here
 The warm-blue breathings of a hidden hearth
 Broke from a bower of vine and honey-suckle :
 One look'd all rosetree, and another wore
 A close-set robe of jasmine sown with stars :
 This had a rosy sea of gillyflowers
 About it ; this, a milky-way on earth,
 Like visions in the Northern dreamer's heavens,
 A lily-avenue climbing to the doors ;
 One, almost to the martin-haunted eaves
 A summer burial deep in hollyhocks ;
 Each, its own charm ; and Edith's everywhere ;
 And Edith ever visitant with him,
 He but less loved than Edith, of her poor :
 For she—so lowly-lovely and so loving,
 Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
 Rose from the clay it work'd in as she past,
 Not sowing hedgerow texts and passing by,
 Nor dealing goodly counsel from a height
 That makes the lowest hate it, but a voice
 Of comfort and an open hand of help,
 A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs
 Revered as theirs, but kindlier than themselves
 To ailing wife or wailing infancy
 Or old bedridden palsy,—was adored ;
 He, loved for her and for himself. A grasp
 Having the warmth and muscle of the heart,
 A childly way with children, and a laugh
 Ringing like proven golden coinage true,
 Were no false passport to that easy realm,
 Where once with Leolin at her side the girl,

T

Nursing a child, and turning to the warmth
 The tender pink five-beaded baby-soles,
 Heard the good mother softly whisper
 ' Bless,
 God bless 'em : marriages are made in Heaven.'

A flash of semi-jealousy clear'd it to her.
 My lady's Indian kinsman unannounced
 With half a score of swarthy faces came.
 His own, tho' keen and bold and soldierly
 Sear'd by the close ecliptic, was not fair ;
 Fairer his talk, a tongue that ruled the hour,
 Tho' seeming boastful : so when first he dash'd
 Into the chronicle of a deedful day,
 Sir Aylmer half forgot his lazy smile
 Of patron ' Good ! my lady's kinsman ! good !'
 My lady with her fingers interlock'd,
 And rotatory thumbs on silken knees,
 Call'd all her vital spirits into each ear
 To listen : unawares they flitted off,
 Busying themselves about the flowerage
 That stood from out a stiff brocade in which,
 The meteor of a splendid season, she,
 Once with this kinsman, ah so long ago,
 Stept thro' the stately minuet of those days :
 But Edith's eager fancy hurried with him
 Snatch'd thro' the perilous passes of his life :
 Till Leolin ever watchful of her eye,
 Hated him with a momentary hate.
 Wife-hunting, as the rumour ran, was he :
 I know not, for he spoke not, only shower'd
 His oriental gifts on everyone
 And most on Edith : like a storm he came,
 And shook the house, and like a storm he went.

Among the gifts he left her (possibly
 He flow'd and ebb'd uncertain, to return

L

When others had been tested) there was one,

A dagger, in rich sheath with jewels on it
Sprinkled about in gold that branch'd
itself

Fine as ice-ferns on January panes

Made by a breath. I know not whence
at first,

Nor of what race, the work ; but as he told
The story, storming a hill-fort of thieves
He got it ; for their captain after fight,
His comrades having fought their last
below,

Was climbing up the valley ; at whom
he shot :

Down from the beetling crag to which he
clung

Tumbled the tawny rascal at his feet,
This dagger with him, which when now
admired

By Edith whom his pleasure was to please,
At once the costly Sahib yielded to her.

And Leolin, coming after he was gone,
Tost over all her presents petulantly :
And when she show'd the wealthy scab-
bard, saying

'Look what a lovely piece of workman-
ship !'

Slight was his answer 'Well—I care not
for it :'

Then playing with the blade he prick'd
his hand,

'A gracious gift to give a lady, this !'

'But would it be more gracious' ask'd
the girl

'Were I to give this gift of his to one
That is no lady?' 'Gracious? No' said he.

'Me?—but I cared not for it. O pardon
me,

I seem to be ungraciousness itself.'

'Take it' she added sweetly, 'tho' his
gift ;

For I am more ungracious ev'n than you,
I care not for it either ;' and he said

'Why then I love it :' but Sir Aylmer
past,

And neither loved nor liked the thing he
heard.

The next day came a neighbour.
Blues and reds

They talk'd of : blues were sure of it, he
thought :

Then of the latest fox—where started—
kill'd

In such a bottom : 'Peter had the brush,
My Peter, first : ' and did Sir Aylmer know
That great pock-pitten fellow had been
caught ?

Then made his pleasure echo, hand to
hand,

And rolling as it were the substance of it
Between his palms a moment up and
down—

'The birds were warm, the birds were
warm upon him ;

We have him now : ' and had Sir Aylmer
heard—

Nay, but he must—the land was ringing
of it—

This blacksmith border-marriage—one
they knew—

Raw from the nursery—who could trust
a child ?

That cursed France with her egalities !

And did Sir Aylmer (deferentially
With nearing chair and lower'd accent)
think—

For people talk'd—that it was wholly wise
To let that handsome fellow Averill walk
So freely with his daughter? people
talk'd—

The boy might get a notion into him ;
The girl might be entangled ere she knew.
Sir Aylmer Aylmer slowly stiffening
spoke :

'The girl and boy, Sir, know their differ-
ences !'

'Good,' said his friend, 'but watch !'
and he, 'Enough,

More than enough, Sir ! I can guard my
own.'

They parted, and Sir Aylmer Aylmer
watch'd.

Pale, for on her the thunders of the
house

Had fallen first, was Edith that same
night ;

Pale as the Jephtha's daughter, a rough
 piece
 Of early rigid colour, under which
 Withdrawing by the counter door to that
 Which Leolin open'd, she cast back upon
 him
 A piteous glance, and vanish'd. He, as
 one
 Caught in a burst of unexpected storm,
 And pelted with outrageous epithets,
 Turning beheld the Powers of the House
 On either side the hearth, indignant;
 her,
 Cooling her false cheek with a featherfan,
 Him, glaring, by his own stale devil
 spurr'd,
 And, like a beast hard-ridden, breathing
 hard.
 'Ungenerous, dishonourable, base,
 Presumptuous! trusted as he was with
 her,
 The sole succeder to their wealth, their
 lands,
 The last remaining pillar of their house,
 The one transmitter of their ancient name,
 Their child.' 'Our child!' 'Our
 heiress!' 'Ours!' for still,
 Like echoes from beyond a hollow, came
 Her sicklier iteration. Last he said,
 'Boy, mark me! for your fortunes are to
 make.
 I swear you shall not make them out of
 mine.
 Now inasmuch as you have practised on
 her,
 Perplex her, made her half forget herself,
 Swerve from her duty to herself and us—
 Things in an Aylmer deem'd impossible,
 Far as we track ourselves—I say that
 this—
 Else I withdraw favour and countenance
 From you and yours for ever—shall you
 do.
 Sir, when you see her—but you shall not
 see her—
 No, you shall write, and not to her, but
 me:
 And you shall say that having spoken
 with me,
 And after look'd into yourself, you find

That you meant nothing—as indeed you
 know
 That you meant nothing. Such a match
 as this!
 Impossible, prodigious!' These were
 words,
 As meted by his measure of himself,
 Arguing boundless forbearance: after
 which,
 And Leolin's horror-stricken answer, 'I
 So foul a traitor to myself and her,
 Never oh never,' for about as long
 As the wind-hover hangs in balance,
 paused
 Sir Aylmer reddening from the storm
 within,
 Then broke all bonds of courtesy, and
 crying
 'Boy, should I find you by my doors
 again,
 My men shall lash you from them like a
 dog;
 Hence!' with a sudden execration drove
 The footstool from before him, and arose;
 So, stammering 'scoundrel' out of teeth
 that ground
 As in a dreadful dream, while Leolin still
 Retreated half-aghast, the fierce old man
 Follow'd, and under his own lintel stood
 Storming with lifted hands, a hoary face
 Meet for the reverence of the hearth, but
 now,
 Beneath a pale and unimpassion'd moon,
 Vext with unworthy madness, and de-
 form'd.

Slowly and conscious of the rageful eye
 That watch'd him, till he heard the
 ponderous door
 Close, crashing with long echoes thro' the
 land,
 Went Leolin; then, his passions all in
 flood
 And masters of his motion, furiously
 Down thro' the bright lawns to his
 brother's ran,
 And foam'd away his heart at Averill's
 ear:
 Whom Averill solaced as he might,
 amazed:

The man was his, had been his father's,
friend :

He must have seen, himself had seen it
long ;

He must have known, himself had known :
besides,

He never yet had set his daughter forth
Here in the woman-markets of the west,
Where our Caucasians let themselves be
sold.

Some one, he thought, had slander'd
Leolin to him.

'Brother, for I have loved you more as
son

Than brother, let me tell you : I myself—
What is their pretty saying ? jilted, is it ?

Jilted I was : I say it for your peace.
Pain'd, and, as bearing in myself the
shame

The woman should have borne, humili-
ated,

I lived for years a stunted sunless life ;
Till after our good parents past away
Watching your growth, I seem'd again to
grow.

Leolin, I almost sin in envying you :
The very whitest lamb in all my fold
Loves you : I know her : the worst
thought she has

Is whiter even than her pretty hand :
She must prove true : for, brother, where
two fight

The strongest wins, and truth and love
are strength,

And you are happy : let her parents be.'

But Leolin cried out the more upon
them—

Insolent, brainless, heartless ! heiress,
wealth,

Their wealth, their heiress ! wealth
enough was theirs

For twenty matches. Were he lord of
this,

Why twenty boys and girls should marry
on it,

And forty blest ones bless him, and him-
self

Be wealthy still, ay wealthier. He be-
lieved

This filthy marriage-hindering Mammon
made

The harlot of the cities : nature crost
Was mother of the foul adulteries

That saturate soul with body. Name,
too ! name,

Their ancient name ! they *might* be
proud ; its worth

Was being Edith's. Ah how pale she
had look'd

Darling, to-night ! they must have rated
her

Beyond all tolerance. These old pheasant-
lords,

These partridge-breeders of a thousand
years,

Who had mildew'd in their thousands,
doing nothing

Since Egbert—why, the greater their
disgrace !

Fall back upon a name ! rest, rot in that !
Not *keep* it noble, make it nobler ? fools,

With such a vantage-ground for nobleness !
He had known a man, a quintessence of

man,
The life of all—who madly loved—and he,
Thwarted by one of these old father-fools,

Had rioted his life out, and made an end.
He would not do it ! her sweet face and

faith
Held him from that : but he had powers,
he knew it :

Back would he to his studies, make a name,
Name, fortune too : the world should ring

of him
To shame these mouldy Aylmers in their
graves :

Chancellor, or what is greatest would he
be—

'O brother, I am grieved to learn your
grief—

Give me my fling, and let me say my say.'

At which, like one that sees his own
excess,

And easily forgives it as his own,
He laugh'd ; and then was mute ; but

presently
Wept like a storm : and honest Averill
seeing

How low his brother's mood had fallen,
 fetch'd
 His richest beeswing from a binn reserved
 For banquets, praised the waning red, and
 told

The vintage—when *this* Aylmer came of
 age—

Then drank and past it; till at length the
 two,

Tho' Leolin flamed and fell again, agreed
 That much allowance must be made for
 men.

After an angry dream this kindlier glow
 Faded with morning, but his purpose held.

Yet once by night again the lovers met,
 A perilous meeting under the tall pines
 That darken'd all the northward of her
 Hall.

Him, to her meek and modest bosom prest
 In agony, she promised that no force,
 Persuasion, no, nor death could alter her:
 He, passionately hopefuller, would go,
 Labour for his own Edith, and return
 In such a sunlight of prosperity
 He should not be rejected. 'Write to
 me!

They loved me, and because I love their
 child

They hate me: there is war between us,
 dear,

Which breaks all bonds but ours; we
 must remain

Sacred to one another.' So they talk'd,
 Poor children, for their comfort: the wind
 blew;

The rain of heaven, and their own bitter
 tears,

Tears, and the careless rain of heaven,
 mixt

Upon their faces, as they kiss'd each other
 In darkness, and above them roar'd the pine.

So Leolin went; and as we task our-
 selves

To learn a language known but smatter-
 ingly

In phrases here and there at random,
 toil'd

Mastering the lawless science of our law,
 That codeless myriad of precedent,
 That wilderness of single instances,
 Thro' which a few, by wit or fortune led,
 May beat a pathway out to wealth and
 fame.

The jests, that flash'd about the pleader's
 room,

Lightning of the hour, the pun, the
 scurrilous tale,—

Old scandals buried now seven decads deep
 In other scandals that have lived and died,
 And left the living scandal that shall die—
 Were dead to him already; bent as he was
 To make disproof of scorn, and strong in
 hopes,

And prodigal of all brain-labour he,
 Chariot of sleep, and wine, and exercise,
 Except when for a breathing-while at eve,
 Some niggard fraction of an hour, he ran
 Beside the river-bank: and then indeed
 Harder the times were, and the hands of
 power

Were bloodier, and the according hearts
 of men

Seem'd harder too; but the soft river-
 breeze,

Which fann'd the gardens of that rival rose
 Yet fragrant in a heart remembering

His former talks with Edith, on him
 breathed

Far purelier in his rushings to and fro,
 After his books, to flush his blood with
 air,

Then to his books again. My lady's
 cousin,

Half-sickening of his pension'd afternoon,
 Drove in upon the student once or twice,
 Ran a Malayan amuck against the times,
 Had golden hopes for France and all
 mankind,

Answer'd all queries touching those at
 home

With a heaved shoulder and a saucy smile,
 And fain had haled him out into the
 world,

And air'd him there: his nearer friend
 would say

'Screw not the chord too sharply lest it
 snap.'

Then left alone he pluck'd her dagger
 forth
 From where his worldless heart had kept
 it warm,
 Kissing his vows upon it like a knight.
 And wrinkled benchers often talk'd of
 him
 Approvingly, and prophesied his rise :
 For heart, I think, help'd head : her
 letters too,
 Tho' far between, and coming fitfully
 Like broken music, written as she found
 Or made occasion, being strictly watch'd,
 Charm'd him thro' every labyrinth till he
 saw
 An end, a hope, a light breaking upon him.

But they that cast her spirit into flesh,
 Her worldly-wise begetters, plagued them-
 selves

To sell her, those good parents, for her
 good.

Whatever eldest-born of rank or wealth
 Might lie within their compass, him they
 lured

Into their net made pleasant by the baits
 Of gold and beauty, wooing him to woo.
 So month by month the noise about their
 doors,

And distant blaze of those dull banquets,
 made

The nightly wirer of their innocent hare
 Falter before he took it. All in vain.
 Sullen, defiant, pitying, wroth, return'd
 Leolin's rejected rivals from their suit
 So often, that the folly taking wings
 Slipt o'er those lazy limits down the wind
 With rumour, and became in other fields
 A mockery to the yeomen over ale,
 And laughter to their lords : but those at
 home,

As hunters round a hunted creature draw
 The cordon close and closer toward the
 death,

Narrow'd her goings out and comings in ;
 Forbad her first the house of Averill,
 Then closed her access to the wealthier
 farms,

Last from her own home-circle of the
 poor

They barr'd her : yet she bore it : yet her
 cheek

Kept colour : wondrous ! but, O mystery !
 What amulet drew her down to that old
 oak,

So old, that twenty years before, a part
 Falling had let appear the brand of John—
 Once grovelike, each huge arm a tree,
 but now

The broken base of a black tower, a cave
 Of touchwood, with a single flourishing
 spray.

There the manorial lord too curiously
 Raking in that millennial touchwood-dust
 Found for himself a bitter treasure-trove ;
 Burst his own wyvern on the seal, and read
 Writhing a letter from his child, for which
 Came at the moment Leolin's emissary,
 A crippled lad, and coming turn'd to fly,
 But scared with threats of jail and halter
 gave

To him that fluster'd his poor parish wits
 The letter which he brought, and swore
 besides

To play their go-between as heretofore
 Nor let them know themselves betray'd ;
 and then,

Soul-stricken at their kindness to him,
 went

Hating his own lean heart and miserable.

Thenceforward oft from out a despot
 dream

The father panting woke, and oft, as dawn
 Aroused the black republic on his elms,
 Sweeping the frothfly from the fescue
 brush'd

Thro' the dim meadow toward his
 treasure-trove,

Seized it, took home, and to my lady,—
 who made

A downward crescent of her minion mouth,
 Listless in all despondence,—read ; and
 tore,

As if the living passion symbol'd there
 Were living nerves to feel the rent ; and
 burnt,

Now chafing at his own great self defied,
 Now striking on huge stumbling-blocks of
 scorn

In babyisms, and dear diminutives
 Scatter'd all over the vocabulary
 Of such a love as like a chidden child,
 After much wailing, hush'd itself at last
 Hopeless of answer: then tho' Averill wrote
 And bad him with good heart sustain
 himself—

All would be well—the lover heeded not,
 But passionately restless came and went,
 And rustling once at night about the place,
 There by a keeper shot at, slightly hurt,
 Raging return'd: nor was it well for her
 Kept to the garden now, and grove of pines,
 Watch'd even there; and one was set to
 watch

The watcher, and Sir Aylmer watch'd
 them all,

Yet bitterer from his readings: once
 indeed,

Warm'd with his wines, or taking pride
 in her,

She look'd so sweet, he kiss'd her tenderly
 Not knowing what possess'd him: that
 one kiss

Was Leolin's one strong rival upon earth;
 Seconded, for my lady follow'd suit,
 Seem'd hope's returning rose: and then
 ensued

A Martin's summer of his faded love,
 Or ordeal by kindness; after this
 He seldom crost his child without a sneer;
 The mother flow'd in shallower acrimo-
 nies:

Never one kindly smile, one kindly word:
 So that the gentle creature shut from all
 Her charitable use, and face to face
 With twenty months of silence, slowly lost
 Nor greatly cared to lose, her hold on life.
 Last, some low fever ranging round to spy
 The weakness of a people or a house,
 Like flies that haunt a wound, or deer, or
 men,

Or almost all that is, hurting the hurt—
 Save Christ as we believe him—found the
 girl

And flung her down upon a couch of fire,
 Where careless of the household faces near,
 And crying upon the name of Leolin,
 She, and with her the race of Aylmer,
 past.

Star to star vibrates light: may soul
 to soul

Strike thro' a finer element of her own?
 So,—from afar,—touch as at once? or
 why

That night, that moment, when she named
 his name,

Did the keen shriek 'Yes love, yes, Edith,
 yes,'

Shrill, till the comrade of his chambers
 woke,

And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
 With a weird bright eye, sweating and
 trembling,

His hair as it were crackling into flames,
 His body half flung forward in pursuit,
 And his long arms stretch'd as to grasp a
 flyer:

Nor knew he wherefore he had made the
 cry;

And being much befool'd and idioted
 By the rough amity of the other, sank
 As into sleep again. The second day,
 My lady's Indian kinsman rushing in,
 A breaker of the bitter news from home,
 Found a dead man, a letter edged with
 death

Beside him, and the dagger which himself
 Gave Edith, reddened with no bandit's
 blood:

'From Edith' was engraven on the blade.

Then Averill went and gazed upon his
 death.

And when he came again, his flock be-
 lieved—

Beholding how the years which are not
 Time's

Had blasted him—that many thousand
 days

Were clipt by horror from his term of life.
 Yet the sad mother, for the second death
 Scarce touch'd her thro' that nearness of
 the first,

And being used to find her pastor texts,
 Sent to the harrow'd brother, praying
 him

To speak before the people of her child,
 And fix the Sabbath. Darkly that day
 rose:

Autumn's mock sunshine of the faded
woods

Was all the life of it ; for hard on these,
A breathless burthen of low-folded heavens
Stifled and chill'd at once ; but every roof
Sent out a listener : many too had known
Edith among the hamlets round, and
since

The parents' harshness and the hapless
loves

And double death were widely murmur'd,
left

Their own gray tower, or plain-faced
tabernacle,

To hear him ; all in mourning these, and
those

With blots of it about them, ribbon, glove
Or kerchief ; while the church,—one
night, except

For greenish glimmerings thro' the lancets,
—made

Still paler the pale head of him, who
tower'd

Above them, with his hopes in either
grave.

Long o'er his bent brows linger'd
Averill,

His face magnetic to the hand from which
Livid he pluck'd it forth, and labour'd
thro'

His brief prayer-prelude, gave the verse
' Behold,

Your house is left unto you desolate !'

But lapsed into so long a pause again
As half amazed half frightened all his flock :
Then from his height and loneliness of
grief

Bore down in flood, and dash'd his angry
heart

Against the desolations of the world.

Never since our bad earth became one
sea,

Which rolling o'er the palaces of the
proud,

And all but those who knew the living
God—

Eight that were left to make a purer
world—

When since had flood, fire, earthquake,
thunder, wrought

Such waste and havock as the idolatries,
Which from the low light of mortality
Shot up their shadows to the Heaven of
Heavens,

And worshipt their own darkness in the
Highest ?

' Gash thyself, priest, and honour thy
brute Baäl,

And to thy worst self sacrifice thyself,
For with thy worst self hast thou clothed
thy God.

Then came a Lord in no wise like to
Baäl.

The babe shall lead the lion. Surely now
The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.
Crown thyself, worm, and worship thine
own lusts !—

No coarse and blockish God of acreage
Stands at thy gate for thee to grovel to—
Thy God is far diffused in noble groves
And princely halls, and farms, and flowing
lawns,

And heaps of living gold that daily grow,
And title-scrolls and gorgeous heraldries.
In such a shape dost thou behold thy
God.

Thou wilt not gash thy flesh for *him* ; for
thine

Fares richly, in fine linen, not a hair
Ruffled upon the scarfskin, even while
The deathless ruler of thy dying house
Is wounded to the death that cannot die ;
And tho' thou numberest with the followers
Of One who cried, " Leave all and follow
me."

Thee therefore with His light about thy
feet,

Thee with His message ringing in thine
ears,

Thee shall thy brother man, the Lord from
Heaven,

Born of a village girl, carpenter's son,
Wonderful, Prince of peace, the Mighty
God,

Count the more base idolater of the two ;
Crueller : as not passing thro' the fire
Bodies, but souls—thy children's—thro'
the smoke,

The blight of low desires—darkening
thine own

To thine own likeness ; or if one of these,
Thy better born unhappily from thee,
Should, as by miracle, grow straight and
fair—

Friends, I was bid to speak of such a one
By those who most have cause to sorrow
for her—

Fairer than Rachel by the palmy well,
Fairer than Ruth among the fields of corn,
Fair as the Angel that said “Hail !” she
seem’d,

Who entering fill’d the house with sudden
light.

For so mine own was brighten’d : where
indeed

The roof so lowly but that beam of
Heaven

Dawn’d sometime thro’ the doorway?
whose the babe

Too ragged to be fondled on her lap,
Warm’d at her bosom? The poor child
of shame

The common care whom no one cared
for, leapt

To greet her, wasting his forgotten heart,
As with the mother he had never known,
In gambols ; for her fresh and innocent
eyes

Had such a star of morning in their blue,
That all neglected places of the field
Broke into nature’s music when they saw
her.

Low was her voice, but won mysterious
way

Thro’ the seal’d ear to which a louder
one

Was all but silence—free of alms her
hand—

The hand that robed your cottage-walls
with flowers

Has often toil’d to clothe your little ones ;
How often placed upon the sick man’s
brow

Cool’d it, or laid his feverous pillow
smooth !

Had you one sorrow and she shared it
not ?

One burthen and she would not lighten it ?

One spiritual doubt she did not soothe ?
Or when some heat of difference sparkled
out,

How sweetly would she glide between
your wraths,

And steal you from each other ! for she
walk’d

Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of
love,

Who still’d the rolling wave of Galilee !
And one—of him I was not bid to
speak—

Was always with her, whom you also
knew.

Him too you loved, for he was worthy
love.

And these had been together from the
first ;

They might have been together till the
last.

Friends, this frail bark of ours, when
sorely tried,

May wreck itself without the pilot’s guilt,
Without the captain’s knowledge : hope
with me.

Whose shame is that, if he went hence
with shame ?

Nor mine the fault, if losing both of these
I cry to vacant chairs and widow’d walls,
“My house is left unto me desolate.”

While thus he spoke, his hearers wept ;
but some,

Sons of the glebe, with other frowns than
those

That knit themselves for summer shadow,
scowl’d

At their great lord. He, when it seem’d
he saw

No pale sheet-lightnings from afar, but
fork’d

Of the near storm, and aiming at his
head,

Sat anger-charm’d from sorrow, soldier-
like,

Erect : but when the preacher’s cadence
flow’d

Softening thro’ all the gentle attributes
Of his lost child, the wife, who watch’d
his face,

Paled at a sudden twitch of his iron
mouth;
And 'O pray God that he hold up' she
thought
'Or surely I shall shame myself and him.'

'Nor yours the blame—for who beside
your hearths
Can take her place—if echoing me you
cry

"Our house is left unto us desolate"?
But thou, O thou that killest, hadst thou
known,

O thou that stonest, hadst thou under-
stood

The things belonging to thy peace and
ours!

Is there no prophet but the voice that
calls

Doom upon kings, or in the waste "Re-
pent"?

Is not our own child on the narrow way,
Who down to those that saunter in the
broad

Cries "Come up hither," as a prophet to
us?

Is there no stoning save with flint and
rock?

Yes, as the dead we weep for testify—
No desolation but by sword and fire?

Yes, as your moanings witness, and my-
self

Am lonelier, darker, earthlier for my loss.
Give me your prayers, for he is past your
prayers,

Not past the living fount of pity in
Heaven.

But I that thought myself long-suffering,
meek,

Exceeding "poor in spirit"—how the
words

Have twisted back upon themselves, and
mean

Vileness, we are grown so proud—I
wish'd my voice

A rushing tempest of the wrath of God
To blow these sacrifices thro' the world—
Sent like the twelve-divided concubine
To inflame the tribes: but there—out
yonder—earth

Lightens from her own central Hell—O
there

The red fruit of an old idolatry—

The heads of chiefs and princes fall so
fast,

They cling together in the ghastly sack—
The land all shambles—naked marriages
Flash from the bridge, and ever-murder'd
France,

By shores that darken with the gathering
wolf,

Runs in a river of blood to the sick sea.

Is this a time to madden madness then?

Was this a time for these to flaunt their
pride?

May Pharaoh's darkness, folds as dense
as those

Which hid the Holiest from the people's
eyes

Ere the great death, shroud this great sin
from all!

Doubtless our narrow world must canvass
it:

O rather pray for those and pity them,
Who, thro' their own desire accomplish'd,
bring

Their own gray hairs with sorrow to the
grave—

Who broke the bond which they desired
to break,

Which else had link'd their race with
times to come—

Who wove coarse webs to snare her
purity,

Grossly contriving their dear daughter's
good—

Poor souls, and knew not what they did,
but sat

Ignorant, devising their own daughter's
death!

May not that earthly chastisement suffice?

Have not our love and reverence left
them bare?

Will not another take their heritage?

Will there be children's laughter in their
hall

For ever and for ever, or one stone

Left on another, or is it a light thing

That I, their guest, their host, their
ancient friend,

I made by these the last of all my race,
Must cry to these the last of theirs, as
cried
Christ ere His agony to those that swore
Not by the temple but the gold, and made
Their own traditions God, and slew the
Lord,
And left their memories a world's curse—
“ Behold,
Your house is left unto you desolate ”?’

Ended he had not, but she brook'd no
more :
Long since her heart had beat remorse-
lessly,
Her cramp't-up sorrow pain'd her, and a
sense
Of meanness in her unresisting life.
Then their eyes vex't her ; for on entering
He had cast the curtains of their seat
aside—
Black velvet of the costliest—she herself
Had seen to that : fain had she closed
them now,
Yet dared not stir to do it, only near'd
Her husband inch by inch, but when she
laid,
Wifelike, her hand in one of his, he veil'd
His face with the other, and at once, as
falls
A creeper when the prop is broken, fell
The woman shrieking at his feet, and
swoon'd.
Then her own people bore along the nave
Her pendent hands, and narrow meagre
face
Seam'd with the shallow cares of fifty
years :
And her the Lord of all the landscape
round
Ev'n to its last horizon, and of all
Who peer'd at him so keenly, follow'd
out
Tall and erect, but in the middle aisle
Reel'd, as a footsore ox in crowded
ways
Stumbling across the market to his death,
Unpitied ; for he groped as blind, and
seem'd
Always about to fall, grasping the pews

And oaken finials till he touch'd the
door ;
Yet to the lychgate, where his chariot
stood,
Strode from the porch, tall and erect
again.

But nevermore did either pass the gate
Save under pall with bearers. In one
month,
Thro' weary and yet ever wearier hours,
The childless mother went to seek her
child ;
And when he felt the silence of his house
About him, and the change and not the

And those fixt eyes of painted ancestors
Staring for ever from their gilded walls
On him their last descendant, his own
head

Began to droop, to fall ; the man became
Imbecile ; his one word was ‘ desolate ;’
Dead for two years before his death was
he ;

But when the second Christmas came,
escaped

His keepers, and the silence which he felt,
To find a deeper in the narrow gloom
By wife and child ; nor wanted at his
end

The dark retinue reverencing death
At golden thresholds ; nor from tender
hearts,

And those who sorrow'd o'er a vanish'd
race,

Pity, the violet on the tyrant's grave.
Then the great Hall was wholly broken
down,

And the broad woodland parcell'd into
farms ;

And where the two contrived their
daughter's good,
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made
his run,

The hedgehog underneath the plantain
bores,

The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow-worm creeps, and the thin
weasel there

Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

SEA DREAMS.

A CITY clerk, but gently born and bred ;
 His wife, an unknown artist's orphan child—
 One babe was theirs, a Margaret, three
 years old :
 They, thinking that her clear germander
 eye
 Droopt in the giant-factoried city-gloom,
 Came, with a month's leave given them,
 to the sea :
 For which his gains were dock'd, however
 small :
 Small were his gains, and hard his work ;
 besides,
 Their slender household fortunes (for the
 man
 Had risk'd his little) like the little thrift,
 Trembled in perilous places o'er a deep :
 And oft, when sitting all alone, his face
 Would darken, as he cursed his credulous-
 ness,
 And that one unctuous mouth which lured
 him, rogue,
 To buy strange shares in some Peruvian
 mine.
 Now seaward-bound for health they gain'd
 a coast,
 All sand and cliff and deep-inrunning cave,
 At close of day ; slept, woke, and went
 the next,
 The Sabbath, pious variers from the
 church,
 To chapel ; where a heated pulpiteer,
 Not preaching simple Christ to simple men,
 Announced the coming doom, and ful-
 minated
 Against the scarlet woman and her creed ;
 For sideways up he swung his arms, and
 shriek'd
 ' Thus, thus with violence,' ev'n as if he
 held
 The Apocalyptic millstone, and himself
 Were that great Angel ; ' Thus with
 violence
 Shall Babylon be cast into the sea ;
 Then comes the close.' The gentle-
 hearted wife

Sat shuddering at the ruin of a world ;
 He at his own : but when the wordy storm
 Had ended, forth they came and paced
 the shore,
 Ran in and out the long sea-framing caves,
 Drank the large air, and saw, but scarce
 believed
 (The sootflake of so many a summer still
 Clung to their fancies) that they saw, the sea.
 So now on sand they walk'd, and now on
 cliff,
 Lingering about the thymy promontories,
 Till all the sails were darken'd in the west,
 And rosed in the east : then homeward and
 to bed :
 Where she, who kept a tender Christian
 hope,
 Haunting a holy text, and still to that
 Returning, as the bird returns, at night,
 ' Let not the sun go down upon your
 wrath,'
 Said, ' Love, forgive him : ' but he did not
 speak ;
 And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
 Remembering her dear Lord who died for
 all,
 And musing on the little lives of men,
 And how they mar this little by their feuds.

But while the two were sleeping, a full
 tide
 Rose with ground-swell, which, on the
 foremost rocks
 Touching, upjetted in spirits of wild sea-
 smoke,
 And scaled in sheets of wasteful foam, and
 fell
 In vast sea-cataracts—ever and anon
 Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs
 Heard thro' the living roar. At this the
 babe,
 Their Margaret cradled near them, wail'd
 and woke
 The mother, and the father suddenly cried,
 ' A wreck, a wreck ! ' then turn'd, and
 groaning said,

' Forgive ! How many will say, " for-
 give," and find
 A sort of absolution in the sound

To hate a little longer ! No ; the sin
That neither God nor man can well for-
give,
Hypocrisy, I saw it in him at once.
Is it so true that second thoughts are best ?
Not first, and third, which are a riper first ?
Too ripe, too late ! they come too late
for use.
Ah love, there surely lives in man and
beast
Something divine to warn them of their
foes :
And such a sense, when first I fronted him,
Said, " Trust him not ; " but after, when
I came
To know him more, I lost it, knew him
less ;
Fought with what seem'd my own un-
charity ;
Sat at his table ; drank his costly wines ;
Made more and more allowance for his
talk ;
Went further, fool ! and trusted him with
all,
All my poor scrapings from a dozen years
Of dust and deskwork : there is no such
mine,
None ; but a gulf of ruin, swallowing gold,
Not making. Ruin'd ! ruin'd ! the sea
roars
Ruin : a fearful night !

' Not fearful ; fair,'
Said the good wife, ' if every star in
heaven
Can make it fair : you do but hear the tide.
Had you ill dreams ?'

' O yes,' he said, ' I dream'd
Of such a tide swelling toward the land,
And I from out the boundless outer deep
Swept with it to the shore, and enter'd one
Of those dark caves that run beneath the
cliffs.
I thought the motion of the boundless deep
Bore thro' the cave, and I was heaved
upon it
In darkness : then I saw one lovely star
Larger and larger. " What a world," I
thought,

" To live in !" but in moving on I found
Only the landward exit of the cave,
Bright with the sun upon the stream
beyond :

And near the light a giant woman sat,
All over earthy, like a piece of earth,
A pickaxe in her hand : then out I slipt
Into a land all sun and blossom, trees
As high as heaven, and every bird that
sings :

And here the night-light flickering in my
eyes
Awoke me.'

' That was then your dream,' she said,
' Not sad, but sweet.'

' So sweet, I lay,' said he,
' And mused upon it, drifting up the
stream

In fancy, till I slept again, and pieced
The broken vision ; for I dream'd that still
The motion of the great deep bore me on,
And that the woman walk'd upon the
brink :

I wonder'd at her strength, and ask'd her
of it :

" It came," she said, " by working in the
mines : "

O then to ask her of my shares, I thought ;
And ask'd ; but not a word ; she shook
her head.

And then the motion of the current ceased,
And there was rolling thunder ; and we
reach'd

A mountain, like a wall of burs and
thorns ;

But she with her strong feet up the steep
hill

Trod out a path : I follow'd ; and at top
She pointed seaward : there a fleet of
glass,

That seem'd a fleet of jewels under me,
Sailing along before a gloomy cloud
That not one moment ceased to thunder,
past

In sunshine : right across its track there lay,
Down in the water, a long reef of gold,
Or what seem'd gold : and I was glad at
first

To think that in our often-ransack'd world
Still so much gold was left ; and then I
fear'd

Lest the gay navy there should splinter
on it,

And fearing waved my arm to warn them
off ;

An idle signal, for the brittle fleet
(I thought I could have died to save it)
near'd,

Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and
vanish'd, and I woke,

I heard the clash so clearly. Now I see
My dream was Life ; the woman honest
Work ;

And my poor venture but a fleet of glass
Wreck'd on a reef of visionary gold.'

'Nay,' said the kindly wife to comfort
him,

'You raised your arm, you tumbled down
and broke

The glass with little Margaret's medicine
in it ;

And, breaking that, you made and broke
your dream :

A trifle makes a dream, a trifle breaks.'

'No trifle,' groan'd the husband ;
'yesterday

I met him suddenly in the street, and ask'd
That which I ask'd the woman in my
dream.

Like her, he shook his head. "Show me
the books !"

He dodged me with a long and loose
account.

"The books, the books !" but he, he could
not wait,

Bound on a matter he of life and death :
When the great Books (see Daniel seven
and ten)

Were open'd, I should find he meant me
well ;

And then began to bloat himself, and ooze
All over with the fat affectionate smile
That makes the widow lean. "My dearest
friend,

Have faith, have faith ! We live by faith,"
said he ;

"And all things work together for the good
Of those"—it makes me sick to quote him
—last

Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-
you went.

I stood like one that had received a blow :
I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,
A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,
A curse in his God-bless-you : then my
eyes

Pursued him down the street, and far
away,

Among the honest shoulders of the crowd,
Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.'

'Was he so bound, poor soul ?' said
the good wife ;

'So are we all : but do not call him, love,
Before you prove him, rogue, and proved,
forgive.

His gain is loss ; for he that wrongs his
friend

Wrongs himself more, and ever bears
about

A silent court of justice in his breast,
Himself the judge and jury, and himself
The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn'd :
And that drags down his life : then comes
what comes

Hereafter : and he meant, he said he
meant,

Perhaps he meant, or partly meant, you
well.'

"With all his conscience and one eye
askew"—

Love, let me quote these lines, that you
may learn

A man is likewise counsel for himself,
Too often, in that silent court of yours—

"With all his conscience and one eye
askew,

So false, he partly took himself for true ;
Whose pious talk, when most his heart
was dry,

Made wet the crafty crowsfoot round his
eye ;

Who, never naming God except for gain,
So never took that useful name in vain,

Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his
 tool,
 And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and
 fool;
 Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace he
 forged,
 And snake-like slimed his victim ere he
 gorged;
 And oft at Bible meetings, o'er the rest
 Arising, did his holy oily best,
 Dropping the too rough H in Hell and
 Heaven,
 To spread the Word by which himself
 had thriven."
 How like you this old satire?"

‘Nay,’ she said,
 ‘I loathe it: he had never kindly heart,
 Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
 Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it,
 But will you hear *my* dream, for I had one
 That altogether went to music? Still
 It awed me.’

Then she told it, having dream'd
 Of that same coast.

—But round the North, a light,
 A belt, it seem'd, of luminous vapour, lay,
 And ever in it a low musical note
 Swell'd up and died; and, as it swell'd,
 a ridge
 Of breaker issued from the belt, and still
 Grew with the growing note, and when
 the note
 Had reach'd a thunderous fulness, on
 those cliffs
 Broke, mixt with awful light (the same as
 that
 Living within the belt) whereby she saw
 That all those lines of cliffs were cliffs no
 more,
 But huge cathedral fronts of every age,
 Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,
 One after one: and then the great ridge
 drew,
 Lessening to the lessening music, back,
 And past into the belt and swell'd again
 Slowly to music: ever when it broke
 The statues, king or saint, or founder fell;

Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin
 left
 Came men and women in dark clusters
 round,
 Some crying, ‘Set them up! they shall
 not fall!’
 And others, ‘Let them lie, for they have
 fall'n.’
 And still they strove and wrangled: and
 she grieved
 In her strange dream, she knew not why,
 to find
 Their wildest wallings never out of tune
 With that sweet note; and ever as their
 shrieks
 Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave
 Returning, while none mark'd it, on the
 crowd
 Broke, mixt with awful light, and show'd
 their eyes
 Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept
 away
 The men of flesh and blood, and men of
 stone,
 To the waste deeps together.

‘Then I fixt
 My wistful eyes on two fair images,
 Both crown'd with stars and high among
 the stars,—
 The Virgin Mother standing with her
 child
 High up on one of those dark minster-
 fronts—
 Till she began to totter, and the child
 Clung to the mother, and sent out a cry
 Which mixt with little Margaret's, and I
 woke,
 And my dream awed me:—well—but
 what are dreams?
 Yours came but from the breaking of a
 glass,
 And mine but from the crying of a
 child.’

‘Child? No!’ said he, ‘but this tide's
 roar, and his,
 Our Boanerges with his threats of doom,
 And loud-lung'd Antibabylonianisms
 (Altho' I grant but little music there)

Went both to make your dream : but if
 there were
 A music harmonizing our wild cries,
 Sphere-music such as that you dream'd
 about,
 Why, that would make our passions far
 too like
 The discords dear to the musician. No—
 One shriek of hate would jar all the hymns
 of heaven :
 True Devils with no ear, they howl in tune
 With nothing but the Devil !

“ True ” indeed !

One of our town, but later by an hour
 Here than ourselves, spoke with me on
 the shore ;
 While you were running down the sands,
 and made
 The dimpled flounce of the sea-furbelow
 flap,
 Good man, to please the child. She
 brought strange news.
 Why were you silent when I spoke to-
 night ?
 I had set my heart on your forgiving him
 Before you knew. We *must* forgive the
 dead.

‘ Dead ! who is dead ? ’

‘ The man your eye pursued.
 A little after you had parted with him,
 He suddenly dropt dead of heart-disease. ’

‘ Dead ? he ? of heart-disease ? what heart
 had he
 To die of ? dead ! ’

‘ Ah, dearest, if there be
 A devil in man, there is an angel too,
 And if he did that wrong you charge him
 with,
 His angel broke his heart. But your
 rough voice
 (You spoke so loud) has roused the child
 again.
 Sleep, little birdie, sleep ! will she not
 sleep
 Without her “ little birdie ” ? well then,
 sleep,
 And I will sing you “ birdie. ” ’

Saying this,
 The woman half turn'd round from him
 she loved,
 Left him one hand, and reaching thro'
 the night
 Her other, found (for it was close be-
 side)
 And half-embraced the basket cradle-
 head
 With one soft arm, which, like the pliant
 bough
 That moving moves the nest and nestling,
 sway'd
 The cradle, while she sang this baby song

What does little birdie say
 In her nest at peep of day ?
 Let me fly, says little birdie,
 Mother, let me fly away.
 Birdie, rest a little longer,
 Till the little wings are stronger.
 So she rests a little longer,
 Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
 In her bed at peep of day ?
 Baby says, like little birdie,
 Let me rise and fly away.
 Baby, sleep a little longer,
 Till the little limbs are stronger.
 If she sleeps a little longer,
 Baby too shall fly away.

‘ She sleeps : let us too, let all evil,
 sleep.
 He also sleeps — another sleep than
 ours.
 He can do no more wrong : forgive him,
 dear,
 And I shall sleep the sounder ! ’

Then the man,
 ‘ His deeds yet live, the worst is yet to
 come.
 Yet let your sleep for this one night be
 sound :
 I do forgive him ! ’

‘ Thanks, my love,’ she said,
 ‘ Your own will be the sweeter,’ and they
 slept.

LUCRETIUS.

LUCILIA, wedded to Lucretius, found
 Her master cold ; for when the morning
 flush
 Of passion and the first embrace had died
 Between them, tho' he lov'd her none the
 less,
 Yet often when the woman heard his foot
 Return from paces in the field, and ran
 To greet him with a kiss, the master took
 Small notice, or austere, for—his mind
 Half buried in some weightier argument,
 Or fancy-borne perhaps upon the rise
 And long roll of the Hexameter—he past
 To turn and ponder those three hundred
 scrolls
 Left by the Teacher, whom he held divine.
 She brook'd it not ; but wrathful, petulant,
 Dreaming some rival, sought and found
 a witch
 Who brew'd the philtre which had power,
 they said,
 To lead an errant passion home again.
 And this, at times, she mingled with his
 drink,
 And this destroy'd him ; for the wicked
 broth
 Confused the chemic labour of the blood,
 And tickling the brute brain within the
 man's
 Made havock among those tender cells,
 and check'd
 His power to shape : he loathed himself ;
 and once
 After a tempest woke upon a morn
 That mock'd him with returning calm,
 and cried :

' Storm in the night ! for thrice I heard
 the rain
 Rushing ; and once the flash of a
 thunderbolt—
 Methought I never saw so fierce a fork—
 Struck out the streaming mountain-side,
 and show'd
 A riotous confluence of watercourses
 Blanching and billowing in a hollow of it,
 Where all but yester-eve was dusty-dry.

' Storm, and what dreams, ye holy
 Gods, what dreams !
 For thrice I waken'd after dreams. Per-
 chance
 We do but recollect the dreams that come
 Just ere the waking : terrible ! for it seem'd
 A void was made in Nature ; all her bonds
 Crack'd ; and I saw the flaring atom-
 streams
 And torrents of her myriad universe,
 Ruining along the illimitable inane,
 Fly on to clash together again, and make
 Another and another frame of things
 For ever : that was mine, my dream, I
 knew it—
 Of and belonging to me, as the dog
 With inward yelp and restless forefoot
 plies
 His function of the woodland : but the
 next !
 I thought that all the blood by Sylla shed
 Came driving rainlike down again on
 earth,
 And where it dash'd the reddening mea-
 dow, sprang
 No dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth,
 For these I thought my dream would
 show to me,
 But girls, Hetairai, curious in their art,
 Hired animalisms, vile as those that made
 The mulberry-faced Dictator's orgies
 worse
 Than aught they fable of the quiet Gods.
 And hands they mixt, and yell'd and
 round me drove
 In narrowing circles till I yell'd again
 Half-suffocated, and sprang up, and saw—
 Was it the first beam of my latest day ?
 ' Then, then, from utter gloom stood
 out the breasts,
 The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a
 sword
 Now over and now under, now direct,
 Pointed itself to pierce, but sank down
 shamed
 At all that beauty ; and as I stared, a fire,
 The fire that left a roofless Ilion,
 Shot out of them, and scorch'd me that
 I woke.

'Is this thy vengeance, holy Venus,
thine,
Because I would not one of thine own
doves,
Not ev'n a rose, were offer'd to thee?
thine,
Forgetful how my rich procemion makes
Thy glory fly along the Italian field,
In lays that will outlast thy Deity?

'Deity? nay, thy worshippers. My
tongue
Trips, or I speak profanely. Which of
these
Angers thee most, or angers thee at all?
Not if thou be'st of those who, far aloof
From envy, hate and pity, and spite and
scorn,
Live the great life which all our greatest
fain
Would follow, center'd in eternal calm.

'Nay, if thou canst, O Goddess, like
ourselves
Touch, and be touch'd, then would I cry
to thee
To kiss thy Mavors, roll thy tender arms
Round him, and keep him from the lust
of blood
That makes a steaming slaughter-house
of Rome.

'Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant
not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and
tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were
abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter
wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse—
Ay, and this Kypris also—did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow
forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat

Of Nature, when she strikes thro' the
thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large, and lambs
are glad
Nosing the mother's udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of
flowers:
Which things appear the work of mighty
Gods.

'The Gods! and if I go *my* work is
left
Unfinish'd—if I go. The Gods, who
haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a
wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of
snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to
mar
Their sacred everlasting calm! and such,
Not all so fine, nor so divine a calm,
Not such, nor all unlike it, man may gain
Letting his own life go. The Gods, the
Gods!
If all be atoms, how then should the
Gods
Being atomic not be dissoluble,
Not follow the great law? My master
held
That Gods there are, for all men so
believe.
I prest my footsteps into his, and meant
Surely to lead my Memmius in a train
Of flowery clauses onward to the proof
That Gods there are, and deathless.
Meant? I meant?
I have forgotten what I meant: my mind
Stumbles, and all my faculties are lamed.

'Look where another of our Gods, the
Sun,
Apollo, Delius, or of older use
All-seeing Hyperion—what you will—
Has mounted yonder; since he never
sware,
Except his wrath were wreak'd on
wretched man,

That he would only shine among the dead
 Hereafter ; tales ! for never yet on earth
 Could dead flesh creep, or bits of roast-
 ing ox
 Moan round the spit—nor knows he
 what he sees ;
 King of the East altho' he seem, and girt
 With song and flame and fragrance, slowly
 lifts
 His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
 That climb into the windy halls of
 heaven :
 And here he glances on an eye new-born,
 And gets for greeting but a wail of pain ;
 And here he stays upon a freezing orb
 That fain would gaze upon him to the
 last ;
 And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n
 And closed by those who mourn a friend
 in vain,
 Not thankful that his troubles are no
 more.
 And me, altho' his fire is on my face
 Blinding, he sees not, nor at all can tell
 Whether I mean this day to end myself,
 Or lend an ear to Plato where he says,
 That men like soldiers may not quit the
 post
 Allotted by the Gods : but he that holds
 The Gods are careless, wherefore need he
 care
 Greatly for them, nor rather plunge at
 once,
 Being troubled, wholly out of sight, and
 sink
 Past earthquake—ay, and gout and stone,
 that break
 Body toward death, and palsy, death-in-
 life,
 And wretched age—and worst disease of
 all,
 These prodigies of myriad nakednesses,
 And twisted shapes of lust, unspeakable,
 Abominable, strangers at my hearth
 Not welcome, harpies miring every dish,
 The phantom husks of something foully
 done,
 And fleeting thro' the boundless universe,
 And blasting the long quiet of my breast
 With animal heat and dire insanity ?

'How should the mind, except it loved
 them, clasp
 These idols to herself? or do they fly
 Now thinner, and now thicker, like the
 flakes
 In a fall of snow, and so press in, perforce
 Of multitude, as crowds that in an hour
 Of civic tumult jam the doors, and bear
 The keepers down, and throng, their rags
 and they
 The basest, far into that council-hall
 Where sit the best and stateliest of the
 land ?

'Can I not fling this horror off me
 again,
 Seeing with how great ease Nature can
 smile,
 Balmier and nobler from her bath of
 storm,
 At random ravage? and how easily
 The mountain there has cast his cloudy
 slough,
 Now towering o'er him in serenest air,
 A mountain o'er a mountain,—ay, and
 within
 All hollow as the hopes and fears of
 men ?

'But who was he, that in the garden
 snared
 Picus and Faunus, rustic Gods? a tale
 To laugh at—more to laugh at in myself—
 For look ! what is it? there? yon arbutus
 Totters ; a noiseless riot underneath
 Strikes through the wood, sets all the
 tops quivering—
 The mountain quickens into Nymph and
 Faun ;
 And here an Oread—how the sun delights
 To glance and shift about her slippery
 sides,
 And rosy knees and supple roundedness,
 And budded bosom-peaks—who this way
 runs
 Before the rest—A satyr, a satyr, see,
 Follows ; but him I proved impossible ;
 Twy-natured is no nature : yet he draws
 Nearer and nearer, and I scan him now
 Beastlier than any phantom of his kind

That ever butted his rough brother-brute
 For lust or lusty blood or provender :
 I hate, abhor, spit, sicken at him ; and
 she
 Loathes him as well ; such a precipitate
 heel,
 Fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-
 wing,
 Whirls her to me : but will she fling
 herself,
 Shameless upon me ? Catch her, goat-
 foot : nay,
 Hide, hide them, million-myrtled wilder-
 ness,
 And cavern-shadowing laurels, hide ! do
 I wish—
 What ?—that the bush were leafless ? or
 to whelm
 All of them in one massacre ? O ye Gods,
 I know you careless, yet, behold, to you
 From childly wont and ancient use I
 call—
 I thought I lived securely as yourselves—
 No lewdness, narrowing envy, monkey-
 spite,
 No madness of ambition, avarice, none :
 No larger feast than under plane or pine
 With neighbours laid along the grass, to
 take
 Only such cups as left us friendly-warm,
 Affirming each his own philosophy—
 Nothing to mar the sober majesties
 Of settled, sweet, Epicurean life.
 But now it seems some unseen monster
 lays
 His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
 Wrenching it backward into his ; and
 spoils
 My bliss in being ; and it was not great ;
 For save when shutting reasons up in
 rhythm,
 Or Heliconian honey in living words,
 To make a truth less harsh, I often grew
 Tired of so much within our little life,
 Or of so little in our little life—
 Poor little life that toddles half an hour
 Crown'd with a flower or two, and there
 an end—
 And since the nobler pleasure seems to
 fade,

Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
 Not manlike end myself ?—our privilege—
 What beast has heart to do it ? And what
 man,
 What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph
 thus ?
 Not I ; not he, who bears one name with
 her
 Whose death-blow struck the dateless
 doom of kings,
 When, brooking not the Tarquin in her
 veins,
 She made her blood in sight of Collatine
 And all his peers, flushing the guiltless
 air,
 Spout from the maiden fountain in her
 heart.
 And from it sprang the Commonwealth,
 which breaks
 As I am breaking now !

‘ And therefore now

Let her, that is the womb and tomb of all,
 Great Nature, take, and forcing far apart
 Those blind beginnings that have made
 me man,
 Dash them anew together at her will
 Thro' all her cycles—into man once more,
 Or beast or bird or fish, or opulent flower :
 But till this cosmic order everywhere
 Shatter'd into one earthquake in one day
 Cracks all to pieces,—and that hour
 perhaps
 Is not so far when momentary man
 Shall seem no more a something to him-
 self,
 But he, his hopes and hates, his homes
 and fanes,
 And even his bones long laid within the
 grave,
 The very sides of the grave itself shall pass,
 Vanishing, atom and void, atom and void,
 Into the unseen for ever,—till that hour,
 My golden work in which I told a truth
 That stays the rolling Ixionian wheel,
 And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and
 plucks
 The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
 Shall stand : ay, surely : then it fails at
 last

And perishes as I must ; for O Thou,
 Passionless bride, divine Tranquillity,
 Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,
 Who fail to find thee, being as thou art
 Without one pleasure and without one
 pain,
 Howbeit I know thou surely must be mine
 Or soon or late, yet out of season, thus
 I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not
 How roughly men may woo thee so they
 win—
 Thus—thus : the soul flies out and dies
 in the air.'

With that he drove the knife into his
 side :
 She heard him raging, heard him fall ;
 ran in,
 Beat breast, tore hair, cried out upon
 herself
 As having fail'd in duty to him, shriek'd
 That she but meant to win him back, fell
 on him,
 Clasp'd, kiss'd him, wail'd : he answer'd,
 'Care not thou !
 Thy duty ? What is duty ? Fare thee
 well !'

THE PRINCESS; A MEDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

SIR Walter Vivian all a summer's day
 Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun
 Up to the people : thither flock'd at noon
 His tenants, wife and child, and thither
 half
 The neighbouring borough with their
 Institute
 Of which he was the patron. I was
 there
 From college, visiting the son,—the son
 A Walter too,—with others of our set,
 Five others : we were seven at Vivian-
 place.

And me that morning Walter show'd
 the house,
 Greek, set with busts : from vases in the
 hall
 Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than
 their names,
 Grew side by side ; and on the pavement
 lay
 Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the
 park,
 Huge Ammonites, and the first bones of
 Time ;
 And on the tables every clime and age

Jumbled together ; celts and calumets,
 Claymore and snowshoe, toys in lava,
 fans
 Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,
 Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,
 The cursed Malayan crease, and battle-
 clubs
 From the isles of palm : and higher on
 the walls,
 Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and
 deer,
 His own forefathers' arms and armour
 hung.

And 'this' he said 'was Hugh's at
 Agincourt ;
 And that was old Sir Ralph's at As-
 calon :
 A good knight he ! we keep a chronicle
 With all about him'—which he brought,
 and I
 Dived in a hoard of tales that dealt with
 knights,
 Half-legend, half-historic, counts and
 kings
 Who laid about them at their wills and
 died ;
 And mixt with these, a lady, one that
 arm'd

Her own fair head, and sallying thro' the
gate,
Had beat her foes with slaughter from
her walls.

'O miracle of women,' said the book,
'O noble heart who, being strait-besieged
By this wild king to force her to his wish,
Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunn'd a
soldier's death,
But now when all was lost or seem'd as
lost—

Her stature more than mortal in the burst
Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire—
Brake with a blast of trumpets from the
gate,

And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,
She trampled some beneath her horses'
heels,

And some were whelm'd with missiles of
the wall,

And some were push'd with lances from
the rock,

And part were drown'd within the whirl-
ing brook :

O miracle of noble womanhood !'

So sang the gallant glorious chronicle ;
And, I all rapt in this, 'Come out,' he
said,

'To the Abbey: there is Aunt Elizabeth
And sister Lilia with the rest.' We went
(I kept the book and had my finger in it)
Down thro' the park: strange was the
sight to me ;

For all the sloping pasture murmur'd,
sown

With happy faces and with holiday.

There moved the multitude, a thousand
heads :

The patient leaders of their Institute
Taught them with facts. One rear'd a
font of stone

And drew, from butts of water on the
slope,

The fountain of the moment, playing,
now

A twisted snake, and now a rain of pearls,
Or steep-up spout whereon the gilded
ball

Danced like a wisp : and somewhat lower
down

A man with knobs and wires and vials
fired

A cannon : Echo answer'd in her sleep
From hollow fields : and here were tele-
scopes

For azure views ; and there a group of
girls

In circle waited, whom the electric shock
Dislink'd with shrieks and laughter :
round the lake

A little clock-work steamer paddling plied
And shook the lilies : perch'd about the
knolls

A dozen angry models jetted steam :

A petty railway ran : a fire-balloon
Rose gem-like up before the dusky groves
And dropt a fairy parachute and past :

And there thro' twenty posts of telegraph
They flash'd a saucy message to and fro
Between the mimic stations ; so that sport
Went hand in hand with Science ; other-
where

Pure sport : a herd of boys with clamour
bowl'd

And stump'd the wicket ; babies roll'd
about

Like tumbled fruit in grass ; and men
and maids

Arranged a country dance, and flew thro'
light

And shadow, while the twangling violin
Struck up with Soldier-laddie, and over-
head

The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from
end to end.

Strange was the sight and smacking of
the time ;

And long we gazed, but satiated at length
Came to the ruins. High-arch'd and ivy-
claspt,

Of finest Gothic lighter than a fire,
Thro' one wide chasm of time and frost
they gave

The park, the crowd, the house ; but all
within

The sward was trim as any garden lawn :

And here we lit on Aunt Elizabeth,
And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends
From neighbour seats : and there was
Ralph himself,

A broken statue propt against the wall,
As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,
Half child half woman as she was, had
wound

A scarf of orange round the stony helm,
And robed the shoulders in a rosy silk,
That made the old warrior from his ivied
nook

Glow like a sunbeam : near his tomb a
feast

Shone, silver-set ; about it lay the guests,
And there we join'd them : then the
maiden Aunt

Took this fair day for text, and from it
preach'd

An universal culture for the crowd,
And all things great ; but we, unworthier,
told

Of college : he had climb'd across the
spikes,

And he had squeezed himself betwixt the
bars,

And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs ;
and one

Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common
men,

But honeying at the whisper of a lord ;
And one the Master, as a rogue in grain
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory.

But while they talk'd, above their heads
I saw

The feudal warrior lady-clad ; which
brought

My book to mind : and opening this I
read

Of old Sir Ralph a page or two that rang
With tilt and tourney ; then the tale of
her

That drove her foes with slaughter from
her walls,

And much I praised her nobleness, and
'Where,'

Ask'd Walter, patting Lilia's head (she lay
Beside him) 'lives there such a woman
now ?'

Quick answer'd Lilia 'There are thou-
sands now

Such women, but convention beats them
down :

It is but bringing up ; no more than that :
You men have done it : how I hate you
all !

Ah, were I something great ! I wish I
were

Some mighty poetess, I would shame you
then,

That love to keep us children ! O I wish
That I were some great princess, I would
build

Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are
taught ;

We are twice as quick !' And here she
shook aside

The hand that play'd the patron with her
curls.

And one said smiling 'Pretty were the
sight

If our old halls could change their sex,
and flaunt

With prudes for proctors, dowagers for
deans,

And sweet girl-graduates in their golden
hair.

I think they should not wear our rusty
gowns,

But move as rich as Emperor-moths, or
Ralph

Who shines so in the corner ; yet I fear,
If there were many Lilies in the brood,

However deep you might embower the
nest,

Some boy would spy it.'

At this upon the sword

She tapt her tiny silken-sandal'd foot :

'That's your light way ; but I would
make it death

For any male thing but to peep at us.'

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she
laugh'd ;

A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her,
she :

But Walter hail'd a score of names upon
 her,
 And 'petty Ogress,' and 'ungrateful
 Puss,'
 And swore he long'd at college, only
 long'd,
 All else was well, for she-society.
 They boated and they cricketed; they
 talk'd
 At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics;
 They lost their weeks; they vex'd the
 souls of deans;
 They rode; they betted; made a hundred
 friends,
 And caught the blossom of the flying
 terms,
 But miss'd the mignonette of Vivian-place,
 The little hearth-flower Lilia. Thus he
 spoke,
 Part banter, part affection.
 'True,' she said,
 'We doubt not that. O yes, you miss'd
 us much.
 I'll stake my ruby ring upon it you
 did.'

She held it out; and as a parrot turns
 Up thro' gilt wires a crafty loving eye,
 And takes a lady's finger with all care,
 And bites it for true heart and not for
 harm,
 So he with Lilia's. Daintily she shriek'd
 And wrung it. 'Doubt my word again!'
 he said.

'Come, listen! here is proof that you
 were miss'd:

We seven stay'd at Christmas up to read;
 And there we took one tutor as to read:
 The hard-grain'd Muses of the cube and
 square

Were out of season: never man, I think,
 So moulder'd in a sinecure as he:
 For while our cloisters echo'd frosty feet,
 And our long walks were stript as bare
 as brooms,

We did but talk you over, pledge you all
 In wassail; often, like as many girls—
 Sick for the hollies and the yews of home—
 As many little trifling Liliads—play'd
 Charades and riddles as at Christmas here,

And *what's my thought* and *when* and
where and *how*,
 And often told a tale from mouth to mouth
 As here at Christmas.'

She remember'd that:
 A pleasant game, she thought: she liked
 it more
 Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.
 But these—what kind of tales did men
 tell men,
 She wonder'd, by themselves?

A half-disdain
 Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips:
 And Walter nodded at me; 'He began,
 The rest would follow, each in turn; and so
 We forged a sevenfold story. Kind?
 what kind?

Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms,
 Seven-headed monsters only made to kill
 Time by the fire in winter.'

'Kill him now,
 The tyrant! kill him in the summer too,'
 Said Lilia; 'Why not now?' the maiden
 Aunt.

'Why not a summer's as a winter's tale?
 A tale for summer as befits the time,
 And something it should be to suit the
 place,

Heroic, for a hero lies beneath,
 Grave, solemn!'

Walter warp'd his mouth at this
 To something so mock-solemn, that I
 laugh'd

And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling
 mirth

An echo like a ghostly woodpecker,
 Hid in the ruins; till the maiden Aunt
 (A little sense of wrong had touch'd her
 face

With colour) turn'd to me with 'As you
 will;

Heroic if you will, or what you will,
 Or be yourself your hero if you will.'

'Take Lilia, then, for heroine' clam-
 our'd he,

'And make her some great Princess, six
 feet high,

Grand, epic, homicidal; and be you
 The Prince to win her!'

'Then follow me, the Prince,'
I answer'd, 'each be hero in his turn !
Seven and yet one, like shadows in a
dream.—

Heroic seems our Princess as required—
But something made to suit with Time
and place,

A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experi-
ments

For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt
them all—

This *were* a medley ! we should have him
back

Who told the "Winter's tale" to do it
for us.

No matter : we will say whatever comes.
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,
From time to time, some ballad or a song
To give us breathing-space.'

So I began,
And the rest follow'd : and the women
sang

Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind :
And here I give the story and the songs.

I.

A prince I was, blue-eyed, and fair in
face,
Of temper amorous, as the first of May,
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern
star.

There lived an ancient legend in our
house.

Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire
burnt

Because he cast no shadow, had fore-
told,

Dying, that none of all our blood should
know

The shadow from the substance, and that
one

Should come to fight with shadows and
to fall.

For so, my mother said, the story ran.

And, truly, waking dreams were, more or
less,

An old and strange affection of the house.
Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven
knows what :

On a sudden in the midst of men and day,
And while I walk'd and talk'd as hereto-
fore,

I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts,
And feel myself the shadow of a dream.

Our great court-Galen poised his gilt-head
cane,

And paw'd his beard, and mutter'd
'catalepsy.'

My mother pitying made a thousand
prayers ;

My mother was as mild as any saint,
Half-canonized by all that look'd on her,
So gracious was her tact and tenderness :
But my good father thought a king a king ;
He cared not for the affection of the house ;
He held his sceptre like a pedant's wand
To lash offence, and with long arms and
hands

Reach'd out, and pick'd offenders from
the mass

For judgment.

Now it chanced that I had been,
While life was yet in bud and blade,
betroth'd

To one, a neighbouring Princess : she to me
Was proxy-wedded with a bootless calf
At eight years old ; and still from time
to time

Came murmurs of her beauty from the
South,

And of her brethren, youths of puissance ;
And still I wore her picture by my heart,
And one dark tress ; and all around them
both

Sweet thoughts would swarm as bees about
their queen.

But when the days drew nigh that I
should wed,

My father sent ambassadors with furs
And jewels, gifts, to fetch her : these
brought back

A present, a great labour of the loom ;
And therewithal an answer vague as wind :

Besides, they saw the king ; he took the gifts ;
 He said there was a compact ; that was true :
 But then she had a will ; was he to blame ?
 And maiden fancies ; loved to live alone
 Among her women ; certain, would not wed.

That morning in the presence room I stood
 With Cyril and with Florian, my two friends :
 The first, a gentleman of broken means
 (His father's fault) but given to starts and bursts
 Of revel ; and the last, my other heart,
 And almost my half-self, for still we moved
 Together, twinn'd as horse's ear and eye.

Now, while they spake, I saw my father's face
 Grow long and troubled like a rising moon,
 Inflamed with wrath : he started on his feet,
 Tore the king's letter, snow'd it down, and rent
 The wonder of the loom thro' warp and woof
 From skirt to skirt ; and at the last he sware
 That he would send a hundred thousand men,
 And bring her in a whirlwind : then he chew'd
 The thrice-turn'd cud of wrath, and cook'd his spleen,
 Communing with his captains of the war.

At last I spoke. ' My father, let me go.
 It cannot be but some gross error lies
 In this report, this answer of a king,
 Whom all men rate askind and hospitable :
 Or, maybe, I myself, my bride once seen,
 Whate'er my grief to find her less than fame,
 May rue the bargain made.' And Florian said :
 ' I have a sister at the foreign court,

Who moves about the Princess ; she, you know,
 Who wedded with a nobleman from thence :
 He, dying lately, left her, as I hear,
 The lady of three castles in that land :
 Thro' her this matter might be sifted clean :
 And Cyril whisper'd : ' Take me with you too.'
 Then laughing ' what, if these weird seizures come
 Upon you in those lands, and no one near
 To point you out the shadow from the truth !
 Take me : I'll serve you better in a strait ;
 I grate on rusty hinges here : ' but ' No !'
 Roar'd the rough king, ' you shall not ; we ourself
 Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead
 In iron gauntlets : break the council up.'

But when the council broke, I rose and past
 Thro' the wild woods that hung about the town ;
 Found a still place, and pluck'd her likeness out ;
 Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying bathed
 In the green gleam of dewy-tassell'd trees :
 What were those fancies ? wherefore break her troth ?
 Proud look'd the lips : but while I meditated
 A wind arose and rush'd upon the South,
 And shook the songs, the whispers, and the shrieks
 Of the wild woods together ; and a Voice
 Went with it, ' Follow, follow, thou shalt win.'

Then, ere the silver sickle of that month
 Became her golden shield, I stole from court
 With Cyril and with Florian, unperceived,
 Cat-footed thro' the town and half in dread
 To hear my father's clamour at our backs
 With Ho ! from some bay-window shake the night ;
 But all was quiet : from the bastion'd walls

Like threaded spiders, one by one, we
dropt,
And flying reach'd the frontier: then we
crost
To a livelier land; and so by tilth and
grange,
And vines, and blowing bosks of wilder-
ness,
We gain'd the mother-city thick with
towers,
And in the imperial palace found the king.

His name was Gama; crack'd and
small his voice,
But bland the smile that like a wrinkling
wind
On glassy water drove his cheek in lines;
A little dry old man, without a star,
Not like a king: three days he feasted us,
And on the fourth I spake of why we
came,
And my betroth'd. 'You do us, Prince,'
he said,
Airing a snowy hand and signet gem,
'All honour. We remember love our-
selves
In our sweet youth: there did a compact
pass
Long summers back, a kind of ceremony—
I think the year in which our olives
fail'd.
I would you had her, Prince, with all my
heart,
With my full heart: but there were
widows here,
Two widows, Lady Psyche, Lady Blanche;
They fed her theories, in and out of place
Maintaining that with equal husbandry
The woman were an equal to the man.
They harp'd on this; with this our ban-
quets rang;
Our dances broke and buzz'd in knots of
talk;
Nothing but this; my very ears were hot
To hear them: knowledge, so my daughter
held,
Was all in all: they had but been, she
thought,
As children; they must lose the child,
assume

The woman: then, Sir, awful odes she
wrote,
Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
But all she is and does is awful; odes
About this losing of the child; and rhymes
And dismal lyrics, prophesying change
Beyond all reason: these the women sang;
And they that know such things—I sought
but peace;
No critic I—would call them master-
pieces:
They master'd *me*. At last she begg'd a
boon,
A certain summer-palace which I have
Hard by your father's frontier: I said no,
Yet being an easy man, gave it: and
there,
All wild to found an University
For maidens, on the spur she fled; and
more
We know not,—only this: they see no
men,
Not ev'n her brother Arac, nor the twins
Her brethren, tho' they love her, look
upon her
As on a kind of paragon; and I
(Pardon me saying it) were much loth to
breed
Dispute betwixt myself and mine: but
since
(And I confess with right) you think me
bound
In some sort, I can give you letters to her;
And yet, to speak the truth, I rate your
chance
Almost at naked nothing.'

Thus the king;
And I, tho' nettled that he seem'd to slur
With garrulous ease and oily courtesies
Our formal compact, yet, not less (all frets
But chafing me on fire to find my bride)
Went forth again with both my friends.
We rode
Many a long league back to the North.
At last
From hills, that look'd across a land of
hope,
We dropt with evening on a rustic town
Set in a gleaming river's crescent-curve,
Close at the boundary of the liberties;

There, enter'd an old hostel, call'd mine
 host
 To council, plied him with his richest
 wines,
 And show'd the late-writ letters of the
 king.

He with a long low sibilation, stared
 As blank as death in marble; then ex-
 claim'd

Averring it was clear against all rules
 For any man to go: but as his brain
 Began to mellow, 'If the king,' he said,
 'Had given us letters, was he bound to
 speak?

The king would bear him out;' and at
 the last—

The summer of the vine in all his veins—
 'No doubt that we might make it worth
 his while.

She once had past that way; he heard
 her speak;

She scared him; life! he never saw the
 like;

She look'd as grand as doomsday and as
 grave:

And he, he revered his liege-lady there;
 He always made a point to post with
 mares;

His daughter and his housemaid were the
 boys:

The land, he understood, for miles about
 Was till'd by women; all the swine were
 sows,

And all the dogs'—

But while he jested thus,
 A thought flash'd thro' me which I clothed
 in act,

Remembering how we three presented
 Maid

Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of
 feast,

In masque or pageant at my father's court.
 We sent mine host to purchase female
 gear;

He brought it, and himself, a sight to
 shake

The midriff of despair with laughter, help
 To lace us up, till, each, in maiden
 plumes

We rustled: him we gave a costly bribe
 To guerdon silence, mounted our good
 steeds,
 And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We follow'd up the river as we rode,
 And rode till midnight when the college
 lights

Began to glitter firefly-like in copse
 And linden alley: then we past an arch,
 Whereon a woman-statue rose with
 wings

From four wing'd horses dark against the
 stars;

And some inscription ran along the front,
 But deep in shadow: further on we gain'd
 A little street half garden and half house;
 But scarce could hear each other speak
 for noise

Of clocks and chimes, like silver hammers
 falling

On silver anvils, and the splash and stir
 Of fountains spouted up and showering
 down

In meshes of the jasmine and the rose:
 And all about us peal'd the nightingale,
 Rapt in her song, and careless of the
 snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas for a sign,
 By two sphere lamps blazon'd like Heaven
 and Earth

With constellation and with continent,
 Above an entry: riding in, we call'd;
 A plump-arm'd Ostleress and a stable
 wench

Came running at the call, and help'd us
 down.

Then stopt a buxom hostess forth, and
 sail'd,

Full-blown, before us into rooms which
 gave

Upon a pillar'd porch, the bases lost
 In laurel: her we ask'd of that and this,
 And who were tutors. 'Lady Blanche'
 she said,

'And Lady Psyche.' 'Which was
 prettiest,
 Best-natured?' 'Lady Psyche.' 'Hers
 are we,'

One voice, we cried ; and I sat down and wrote,

In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East ;

‘Three ladies of the Northern empire
pray

Your Highness would enroll them with
your own,

As Lady Psyche’s pupils.’

This I seal’d :

The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,
And o’er his head Uranian Venus hung,
And raised the blinding bandage from his
eyes :

I gave the letter to be sent with dawn ;
And then to bed, where half in doze I
seem’d

To float about a glimmering night, and
watch

A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight,
swell

On some dark shore just seen that it was
rich.

II.

As thro’ the land at eve we went,

And pluck’d the ripen’d ears,

We fell out, my wife and I,

O we fell out I know not why,

And kiss’d again with tears.

And blessings on the falling out

That all the more endears,

When we fall out with those we love

And kiss again with tears !

For when we came where lies the child

We lost in other years,

There above the little grave,

O there above the little grave,

We kiss’d again with tears.

At break of day the College Portress
came :

She brought us Academic silks, in hue

The lilac, with a silken hood to each,

And zoned with gold ; and now when
these were on,

And we as rich as moths from dusk
cocoons,

She, curtsying her obeisance, let us know

The Princess Ida waited : out we paced,

I first, and following thro’ the porch that
sang

All round with laurel, issued in a court
Compact of lucid marbles, boss’d with
lengths

Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay
Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns
of flowers.

The Muses and the Graces, group’d in
threes,

Enring’d a billowing fountain in the midst ;

And here and there on lattice edges lay

Or book or lute ; but hastily we past,

And up a flight of stairs into the hall.

There at a board by tome and paper
sat,

With two tame leopards couch’d beside
her throne,

All beauty compass’d in a female form,

The Princess ; liker to the inhabitant

Of some clear planet close upon the Sun,

Than our man’s earth ; such eyes were in
her head,

And so much grace and power, breathing
down

From over her arch’d brows, with every
turn

Lived thro’ her to the tips of her long
hands,

And to her feet. She rose her height,
and said :

‘We give you welcome : not without
redound

Of use and glory to yourselves ye come,

The first-fruits of the stranger : aftertime,

And that full voice which circles round
the grave,

Will rank you nobly, mingled up with me.

What ! are the ladies of your land so
tall ?’

‘We of the court’ said Cyril. ‘From
the court’

She answer’d, ‘then ye know the Prince?’
and he :

‘The climax of his age ! as tho’ there were
One rose in all the world, your Highness
that,

He worships your ideal :’ she replied :

'We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear

This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
Your flight from out your bookless wilds
would seem

As arguing love of knowledge and of power ;

Your language proves you still the child.
Indeed,

We dream not of him : when we set our hand

To this great work, we purposed with ourself

Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks, which make us toys of men,
that so,

Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-styled our lords ally

Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with scale.'

At those high words, we conscious of ourselves,

Perused the matting ; then an officer
Rose up, and read the statutes, such as these :

Not for three years to correspond with home ;

Not for three years to cross the liberties ;
Not for three years to speak with any men ;

And many more, which hastily subscribed,
We enter'd on the boards : and 'Now,' she cried,

'Ye are green wood, see ye warp not.
Look, our hall !

Our statues !—not of those that men desire,

Sleek Odaliskes, or oracles of mode,
Nor stunted squaws of West or East ; but she

That taught the Sabine how to rule, and she

The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
The Rhodope, that built the pyramid,
Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene

That fought Aurelian, and the Roman brows

Of Agrippina. Dwell with these, and lose

Convention, since to look on noble forms
Makes noble thro' the sensuous organism
That which is higher. O lift your natures up :

Embrace our aims : work out your freedom. Girls,

Knowledge is now no more a fountain seal'd :

Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,
The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble. Leave us : you may go :

To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue
The fresh arrivals of the week before ;
For they press in from all the provinces,
And fill the hive.'

She spoke, and bowing waved
Dismissal : back again we crost the court
To Lady Psyche's : as we enter'd in,
There sat along the forms, like morning doves

That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,

A patient range of pupils ; she herself
Erect behind a desk of satin-wood,
A quick brunette, well-moulded, falcon-eyed,

And on the hither side, or so she look'd,
Of twenty summers. At her left, a child,
In shining draperies, headed like a star,
Her maiden babe, a double April old,
Aglaia slept. We sat : the Lady glanced :
Then Florian, but no livelier than the dame

That whisper'd 'Asses' ears,' among the sedge,

'My sister.' 'Comely, too, by all that's fair,'

Said Cyril. 'O hush, hush !' and she began.

'This world was once a fluid haze of light,

Till toward the centre set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast

The planets : then the monster, then the man ;

Tattoo'd or woaded, winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, and crushing down
his mate ;

As yet we find in barbarous isles, and
here

Among the lowest.'

Thereupon she took
A bird's-eye-view of all the ungracious
past ;

Glanced at the legendary Amazon

As emblematic of a nobler age ;

Appraised the Lycian custom, spoke of
those

That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo ;
Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman
lines

Of empire, and the woman's state in each,
How far from just ; till warming with her
theme

She fulminated out her scorn of laws Salique
And little-footed China, touch'd on
Mahomet

With much contempt, and came to
chivalry :

When some respect, however slight, was
paid

To woman, superstition all awry :

However then commenced the dawn : a
beam

Had slanted forward, falling in a land
Of promise ; fruit would follow. Deep,
indeed,

Their debt of thanks to her who first had
dared

To leap the rotten pales of prejudice,
Disyoke their necks from custom, and
assert

None lordlier than themselves but that
which made

Woman and man. She had founded ;
they must build.

Here might they learn whatever men were
taught :

Let them not fear: some said their heads
were less :

Some men's were small ; not they the
least of men ;

For often fineness compensated size :

Besides the brain was like the hand, and
grew

With using ; thence the man's, if more
was more ;

He took advantage of his strength to be
First in the field : some ages had been lost ;
But woman ripen'd earlier, and her life
Was longer ; and albeit their glorious
names

Were fewer, scatter'd stars, yet since in
truth

The highest is the measure of the man,
And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay,
Nor those horn-handed breakers of the
glebe,

But Homer, Plato, Verulam ; even so
With woman : and in arts of government
Elizabeth and others ; arts of war

The peasant Joan and others ; arts of grace
Sappho and others vied with any man :
And, last not least, she who had left her
place,

And bow'd her state to them, that they
might grow

To use and power on this Oasis, lapt
In the arms of leisure, sacred from the
blight

Of ancient influence and scorn.

At last

She rose upon a wind of prophecy
Dilating on the future ; 'everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the
hearth,

Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound
the abyss

Of science, and the secrets of the mind :
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more ;
And everywhere the broad and bounteous
Earth

Should bear a double growth of those
rare souls,

Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood
of the world.'

She ended here, and beckon'd us : the
rest

Parted ; and, glowing full-faced welcome,
she

Began to address us, and was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks, and the slacken'd sail flaps, all
her voice

Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she
cried

'My brother!' 'Well, my sister.' 'O,'
she said,

'What do you here? and in this dress?
and these?

Why who are these? a wolf within the
fold!

A pack of wolves! the Lord be gracious
to me!

A plot, a plot, a plot, to ruin all!

'No plot, no plot,' he answer'd.
'Wretched boy,

How saw you not the inscription on the
gate,

LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF
DEATH?'

'And if I had,' he answer'd, 'who could
think

The softer Adams of your Academe,
O sister, Sirens tho' they be, were such
As chanted on the blanching bones of
men?'

'But you will find it otherwise' she said.
'You jest: ill jesting with edge-tools!
my vow

Binds me to speak, and O that iron will,
That axelike edge unturnable, our Head,
The Princess.' 'Well then, Psyche, take
my life,

And nail me like a weasel on a grange
For warning: bury me beside the gate,
And cut this epitaph above my bones;
*Here lies a brother by a sister slain,
All for the common good of womankind.'*

'Let me die too,' said Cyril, 'having
seen

And heard the Lady Psyche.'

I struck in:

'Albeit so mask'd, Madam, I love the
truth;

Receive it; and in me behold the Prince
Your countryman, affianced years ago
To the Lady Ida: here, for here she was,
And thus (what other way was left) I
came.'

'O Sir, O Prince, I have no country
none;

If any, this; but none. Whate'er I was
Disrooted, what I am is grafted here.

Affianced, Sir? love-whispers may not
breathe

Within this vestal limit, and how should
I,

Who am not mine, say, live: the thunder-
bolt

Hangs silent; but prepare: I speak; it
falls.'

'Yet pause,' I said: 'for that inscription
there,

I think no more of deadly lurks therein,
Than in a clapper clapping in a garth,
To scare the fowl from fruit: if more
there be,

If more and acted on, what follows? war;
Your own work marr'd: for this your
Academe,

Whichever side be Victor, in the halloo
Will topple to the trumpet down, and
pass

With all fair theories only made to gild
A stormless summer.' 'Let the Princess
judge

Of that' she said: 'farewell, Sir—and
to you.

I shudder at the sequel, but I go.'

'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I re-
join'd,

'The fifth in line from that old Florian,
Yet hangs his portrait in my father's hall
(The gaunt old Baron with his beetle brow
Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights)
As he bestrode my Grandsire, when he
fell,

And all else fled? we point to it, and
we say,

The loyal warmth of Florian is not cold,
But branches current yet in kindred
veins.'

'Are you that Psyche,' Florian added;
'she

With whom I sang about the morning
hills,

Flung ball, flew kite, and raced the
purple fly,

And snared the squirrel of the glen? are
you
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing
brow,
To smoothe my pillow, mix the foaming
draught
Of fever, tell me pleasant tales, and read
My sickness down to happy dreams? are
you
That brother-sister Psyche, both in one?
You were that Psyche, but what are you
now?
'You are that Psyche,' Cyril said, 'for
whom
I would be that for ever which I seem,
Woman, if I might sit beside your feet,
And glean your scatter'd sapience.'
Then once more,
'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I began,
'That on her bridal morn before she past
From all her old companions, when the
king
Kiss'd her pale cheek, declared that
ancient ties
Would still be dear beyond the southern
hills;
That were there any of our people there
In want or peril, there was one to hear
And help them? look! for such are these
and I.'
'Are you that Psyche,' Florian ask'd,
'to whom,
In gentler days, your arrow-wounded fawn
Came flying while you sat beside the well?
The creature laid his muzzle on your lap,
And sobb'd; and you sobb'd with it, and
the blood
Was sprinkled on your kirtle, and you
wept.
That was fawn's blood, not brother's, yet
you wept.
O by the bright head of my little niece,
You were that Psyche, and what are
you now?'
'You are that Psyche,' Cyril said again,
'The mother of the sweetest little maid,
That ever crow'd for kisses.'
'Out upon it!'
She answer'd, 'peace! and why should
I not play

The Spartan Mother with emotion, be
The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind?
Him you call great: he for the common
weal,
The fading politics of mortal Rome,
As I might slay this child, if good need
were,
Slew both his sons: and I, shall I, on
whom
The secular emancipation turns
Of half this world, be swerved from right
to save
A prince, a brother? a little will I yield.
Best so, perchance, for us, and well for
you.
O hard, when love and duty clash! I fear
My conscience will not count me fleck-
less; yet—
Hear my conditions: promise (otherwise
You perish) as you came, to slip away
To-day, to-morrow, soon: it shall be
said,
These women were too barbarous, would
not learn;
They fled, who might have shamed us:
promise, all.'

What could we else, we promised each;
and she,
Like some wild creature newly-caged,
commenced
A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paused
By Florian; holding out her lily arms
Took both his hands, and smiling faintly
said:
'I knew you at the first: tho' you have
grown
You scarce have alter'd: I am sad and
glad
To see you, Florian. I give thee to death
My brother! it was duty spoke, not I.
My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.
Our mother, is she well?'

With that she kiss'd
His forehead, then, a moment after, clung
About him, and betwixt them blossom'd
up
From out a common vein of memory
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the
hearth,

And far allusion, till the gracious dews
Began to glisten and to fall: and while
They stood, so rapt, we gazing, came a
voice,

'I brought a message here from Lady
Blanche.'

Back started she, and turning round we
saw

The Lady Blanche's daughter where she
stood,

Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
A rosy blonde, and in a college gown,
That clad her like an April daffodilly
(Her mother's colour) with her lips apart,
And all her thoughts as fair within her
eyes,

As bottom agates seen to wave and float
In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the
door.

Then Lady Psyche, 'Ah—Melissa—you!
You heard us?' and Melissa, 'O pardon
me

I heard, I could not help it, did not
wish:

But, dearest Lady, pray you fear me not,
Nor think I bear that heart within my
breast,

To give three gallant gentlemen to death.'

'I trust you,' said the other, 'for we two
Were always friends, none closer, elm
and vine:

But yet your mother's jealous tempera-
ment—

Let not your prudence, dearest, drowse,
or prove

The Danaïd of a leaky vase, for fear
This whole foundation ruin, and I lose
My honour, these their lives.' 'Ah, fear
me not'

Replied Melissa; 'no—I would not tell,
No, not for all Aspasia's cleverness,
No, not to answer, Madam, all those
hard things

That Sheba came to ask of Solomon.'
'Be it so' the other, 'that we still may
lead

The new light up, and culminate in peace,
For Solomon may come to Sheba yet.'

Said Cyril, 'Madam, he the wisest man
Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls
Of Lebanonian cedar: nor should you
(Tho', Madam, *you* should answer, *we*
would ask)

Less welcome find among us, if you came
Among us, debtors for our lives to you,
Myself for something more.' He said
not what,

But 'Thanks,' she answer'd 'Go: we have
been too long

Together: keep your hoods about the
face;

They do so that affect abstraction here.
Speak little; mix not with the rest; and
hold

Your promise: all, I trust, may yet be
well.'

We turn'd to go, but Cyril took the
child,

And held her round the knees against his
waist,

And blew the swoll'n cheek of a trumpeter,
While Psyche watch'd them, smiling, and
the child

Push'd her flat hand against his face and
laugh'd;

And thus our conference closed.

And then we stroll'd

For half the day thro' stately theatres
Bench'd crescent-wise. In each we sat,
we heard

The grave Professor. On the lecture
slate

The circle rounded under female hands
With flawless demonstration: follow'd
then

A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,
With scraps of thundrous Epic lilted out
By violet-hooded Doctors, elegies
And quoted odes, and jewels five-words-
long

That on the stretch'd forefinger of all
Time

Sparkle for ever: then we dipt in all
That treats of whatsoever is, the state,
The total chronicles of man, the mind,
The morals, something of the frame, the
rock,

The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the flower,
 Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
 And whatsoever can be taught and known;
 Till like three horses that have broken fence,
 And glutted all night long breast-deep in corn,
 We issued gorged with knowledge, and I spoke:
 'Why, Sirs, they do all this as well as we.'
 'They hunt old trails' said Cyril 'very well;
 But when did woman ever yet invent?'
 'Ungracious!' answer'd Florian; 'have you learnt
 No more from Psyche's lecture, you that talk'd
 The trash that made me sick, and almost sad?'
 'O trash' he said, 'but with a kernel in it.
 Should I not call her wise, who made me wise?
 And learnt? I learnt more from her in a flash,
 Than if my brainpan were an empty hull,
 And every Muse tumbled a science in.
 A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls,
 And round these halls a thousand baby loves
 Fly twanging headless arrows at the hearts,
 Whence follows many a vacant pang;
 but O
 With me, Sir, enter'd in the bigger boy,
 The Head of all the golden-shafted firm,
 The long-limb'd lad that had a Psyche too;
 He cleft me thro' the stomacher; and now
 What think you of it, Florian? do I chase
 The substance or the shadow? will it hold?
 I have no sorcerer's malison on me,
 No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I
 Flatter myself that always everywhere
 I know the substance when I see it. Well,

Are castles shadows? Three of them?
 Is she
 The sweet proprietress a shadow? If not,
 Shall those three castles patch my tatter'd coat?
 For dear are those three castles to my wants,
 And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,
 And two dear things are one of double worth,
 And much I might have said, but that my zone
 Unmann'd me: then the Doctors! O to hear
 The Doctors! O to watch the thirsty plants
 Imbibing! once or twice I thought to roar,
 To break my chain, to shake my mane:
 but thou,
 Modulate me, Soul of mincing mimicry!
 Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my throat;
 Abase those eyes that ever loved to meet
 Star-sisters answering under crescent brows;
 Abate the stride, which speaks of man,
 and loose
 A flying charm of blushes o'er this cheek,
 Where they like swallows coming out of time
 Will wonder why they came: but hark the bell
 For dinner, let us go!
 And in we stream'd
 Among the columns, pacing staid and still
 By twos and threes, till all from end to end
 With beauties every shade of brown and fair
 In colours gayer than the morning mist,
 The long hall glitter'd like a bed of flowers.
 How might a man not wander from his wits
 Pierced thro' with eyes, but that I kept mine own
 Intent on her, who rapt in glorious dreams,
 The second-sight of some Astræan age,
 Sat compass'd with professors: they, the while,

Discuss'd a doubt and tost it to and fro :
A clamour thicken'd, mixt with inmost
terms

Of art and science : Lady Blanche alone
Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,
With all her autumn tresses falsely brown,
Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger-cat
In act to spring.

At last a solemn grace
Concluded, and we sought the gardens :
there

One walk'd reciting by herself, and one
In this hand held a volume as to read,
And smoothed a petted peacock down
with that :

Some to a low song oar'd a shallop by,
Or under arches of the marble bridge
Hung, shadow'd from the heat : some
hid and sought

In the orange thickets : others tost a ball
Above the fountain-jets, and back again
With laughter : others lay about the
lawns,

Of the older sort, and murmur'd that their
May

Was passing : what was learning unto
them ?

They wish'd to marry ; they could rule a
house ;

Men hated learned women : but we three
Sat muffled like the Fates ; and often
came

Melissa hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not : then day droopt ; the
chapel bells

Call'd us : we left the walks ; we mixt
with those

Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,
Before two streams of light from wall to
wall,

While the great organ almost burst his
pipes,

Groaning for power, and rolling thro' the
court

A long melodious thunder to the sound
Of solemn psalms, and silver litanies,
The work of Ida, to call down from
Heaven

A blessing on her labours for the world.

III.

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea !
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me ;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon ;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon ;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon :
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

Morn in the white wake of the morning
star

Came furrowing all the orient into gold.
We rose, and each by other drest with
care

Descended to the court that lay three parts
In shadow, but the Muses' heads were
touch'd

Above the darkness from their native East.

There while we stood beside the fount,
and watch'd

Or seem'd to watch the dancing bubble,
approach'd

Melissa, tinged with wan from lack of
sleep,

Or grief, and glowing round her dewy
eyes

The circled Iris of a night of tears ;

'And fly,' she cried, 'O fly, while yet
you may !

My mother knows : ' and when I ask'd
her 'how,'

'My fault' she wept 'my fault ! and yet
not mine ;

Yet mine in part. O hear me, pardon
me.

My mother, 'tis her wont from night to
night

To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.

She says the Princess should have been
the Head,

Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms ;

And so it was agreed when first they came ;

But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,
And she the left, or not, or seldom used ;
Hers more than half the students, all the love.

And so last night she fell to canvass you :
Her countrywomen ! she did not envy her.

"Who ever saw such wild barbarians ?
Girls?—more like men !" and at these words the snake,

My secret, seem'd to stir within my breast ;
And oh, Sirs, could I help it, but my cheek

Began to burn and burn, and her lynx eye

To fix and make me hotter, till she laugh'd :

"O marvellously modest maiden, you !
Men ! girls, like men ! why, if they had been men

You need not set your thoughts in rubric
thus

For wholesale comment." Pardon, I am shamed

That I must needs repeat for my excuse
What looks so little graceful : "men"
(for still

My mother went revolving on the word)
"And so they are,—very like men indeed—

And with that woman closeted for hours !" Then came these dreadful words out one by one,

"Why—these—*are*—men : " I shudder'd :
"and you know it."

"O ask me nothing," I said : "And she knows too,
And she conceals it." So my mother clutch'd

The truth at once, but with no word from me ;

And now thus early risen she goes to inform

The Princess : Lady Psyche will be crush'd ;

But you may yet be saved, and therefore fly :

But heal me with your pardon ere you go.' |

'What pardon, sweet Melissa, for a blush?'

Said Cyril : 'Pale one, blush again : than wear

Those lilies, better blush our lives away.
Yet let us breathe for one hour more in Heaven'

He added, 'let some classic Angel speal
In scorn of us, "They mounted, Gany medes,

To tumble, Vulcans, on the second morn."
But I will melt this marble into wax
To yield us farther furlough : ' and he went.

 Melissa shook her doubtful curls, and thought

He scarce would prosper. 'Tell us,' Florian ask'd,

'How grew this feud betwixt the right and left.'

'O long ago,' she said, 'betwixt these two

Division smoulders hidden ; 'tis my mother,

Too jealous, often fretful as the wind
Pent in a crevice : much I bear with her :
I never knew my father, but she says
(God help her) she was wedded to a fool ;
And still she rail'd against the state of things.

She had the care of Lady Ida's youth,
And from the Queen's decease she brought her up.

But when your sister came she won the heart

Of Ida : they were still together, grew
(For so they said themselves) inoculated ;
Consonant chords that shiver to one note ;
One mind in all things : yet my mother still

Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,
And angled with them for her pupil's love :
She calls her plagiarist ; I know not what :
But I must go : I dare not tarry,' and light,

As flies the shadow of a bird, she fled.

 Then murmur'd Florian gazing after her,

'An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.

If I could love, why this were she : how
 pretty
 Her blushing was, and how she blush'd
 again,
 As if to close with Cyril's random wish :
 Not like your Princess cramm'd with
 erring pride,
 Nor like poor Psyche whom she drags in
 tow.'

'The crane,' I said, 'may chatter of
 the crane,
 The dove may murmur of the dove, but I
 An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.
 My princess, O my princess ! true she errs,
 But in her own grand way : being herself
 Three times more noble than three score
 of men,
 She sees herself in every woman else,
 And so she wears her error like a crown
 To blind the truth and me : for her, and
 her,
 Hebes are they to hand ambrosia, mix
 The nectar ; but—ah she—whene'er she
 moves
 The Samian Herè rises and she speaks
 A Memnon smitten with the morning
 Sun.'

So saying from the court we paced,
 and gain'd
 The terrace ranged along the Northern
 front,
 And leaning there on those balusters, high
 Above the empurpled champaign, drank
 the gale
 That blown about the foliage underneath,
 And sated with the innumerable rose,
 Beat balm upon our eyelids. Hither came
 Cyril, and yawning 'O hard task,' he
 cried ;
 'No fighting shadows here ! I forced a
 way
 Thro' solid opposition crabb'd and gnarl'd.
 Better to clear prime forests, heave and
 thump
 A league of street in summer solstice
 down,
 Than hammer at this reverend gentle-
 woman.

I knock'd and, bidden, enter'd ; found
 her there
 At point to move, and settled in her eyes
 The green malignant light of coming
 storm.
 Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-
 oil'd,
 As man's could be ; yet maiden-meek
 pray'd
 Concealment : she demanded who we
 were,
 And why we came ? I fabled nothing fair,
 But, your example pilot, told her all.
 Up went the hush'd amaze of hand and
 eye.
 But when I dwelt upon your old affiance,
 She answer'd sharply that I talk'd astray.
 I urged the fierce inscription on the gate,
 And our three lives. True—we had
 limed ourselves
 With open eyes, and we must take the
 chance.
 But such extremes, I told her, well might
 harm
 The woman's cause. "Not more than
 now," she said,
 "So puddled as it is with favouritism."
 I tried the mother's heart. Shame might
 befall
 Melissa, knowing, saying not she knew :
 Her answer was "Leave me to deal with
 that."
 I spoke of war to come and many deaths,
 And she replied, her duty was to speak,
 And duty duty, clear of consequences.
 I grew discouraged, Sir ; but since I knew
 No rock so hard but that a little wave
 May beat admission in a thousand years,
 I recommenced ; "Decide not ere you
 pause.
 I find you here but in the second place,
 Some say the third—the authentic found-
 ress you.
 I offer boldly : we will seat you highest :
 Wink at our advent : help my prince to
 gain
 His rightful bride, and here I promise
 you
 Some palace in our land, where you shall
 reign

The head and heart of all our fair she-
world,
And your great name flow on with broad-
ening time
For ever." Well, she balanced this a
little,
And told me she would answer us to-day,
Meantime be mute : thus much, nor more
I gain'd.'

He ceasing, came a message from the
Head.
'That afternoon the Princess rode to take
The dip of certain strata to the North.
Would we go with her? we should find
the land
Worth seeing; and the river made a fall
Out yonder:' then she pointed on to
where
A double hill ran up his furrowy forks
Beyond the thick-leaved platans of the
vale.

Agreed to, this, the day fled on thro'
all
Its range of duties to the appointed hour.
Then summon'd to the porch we went.
She stood
Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on
one
Of those tame leopards. Kittenlike he
roll'd
And paw'd about her sandal. I drew
near;
I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure
came
Upon me, the weird vision of our house :
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens, empty
masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,
For all things were and were not. Yet
I felt
My heart beat thick with passion and
with awe;
Then from my breast the involuntary sigh
Brake, as she smote me with the light of
eyes

That lent my knee desire to kneel, and
shook
My pulses, till to horse we got, and so
Went forth in long retinue following up
The river as it narrow'd to the hills.

I rode beside her and to me she said :
'O friend, we trust that you esteem'd us
not
Too harsh to your companion yestermorn;
Unwillingly we spake.' 'No—not to her,'
I answer'd, 'but to one of whom we spake
Your Highness might have seem'd the
thing you say.'
'Again?' she cried, 'are you ambassa-
dresses
From him to me? we give you, being
strange,
A license : speak, and let the topic die.'

I stammer'd that I knew him—could
have wish'd—
'Our king expects—was there no pre-
contract?
There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem
All he prefigured, and he could not see
The bird of passage flying south but
long'd
To follow : surely, if your Highness keep
Your purport, you will shock him ev'n to
death,
Or baser courses, children of despair.'

'Poor boy,' she said, 'can he not read
—no books?
Quoit, tennis, ball—no games? nor deals
in that
Which men delight in, martial exercise?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,
Methinks he seems no better than a girl;
As girls were once, as we ourself have
been :
We had our dreams; perhaps he mixt
with them :
We touch on our dead self, nor shun to
do it,
Being other—since we learnt our meaning
here,
To lift the woman's fall'n divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man.'

She paused, and added with a haughtier smile
 'And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,
 At no man's beck, but know ourself and thee,
 O Vashti, noble Vashti ! Summon'd out
 She kept her state, and left the drunken king
 To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms.'

'Alas your Highness breathes full East,' I said,
 'On that which leans to you. I know the Prince,
 I prize his truth : and then how vast a work
 To assail this gray preëminence of man !
 You grant me license ; might I use it ? think ;
 Ere half be done perchance your life may fail ;
 Then comes the feebler heiress of your plan,
 And takes and ruins all ; and thus your pains
 May only make that footprint upon sand
 Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
 Resmooth to nothing : might I dread that you,
 With only Fame for spouse and your great deeds
 For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss,
 Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,
 Love, children, happiness ?'

And she exclaim'd,
 'Peace, you young savage of the Northern wild !
 What ! tho' your Prince's love were like a God's,
 Have we not made ourself the sacrifice ?
 You are bold indeed : we are not talk'd to thus :
 Yet will we say for children, would they grew
 Like field-flowers everywhere ! we like them well :
 But children die ; and let me tell you, girl,

Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die ;
 They with the sun and moon renew their light
 For ever, blessing those that look on them.
 Children—that men may pluck them from our hearts,
 Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—
 O—children—there is nothing upon earth
 More miserable than she that has a son
 And sees him err : nor would we work for fame ;
 Tho' she perhaps might reap the applause of Great,
 Who learns the one POU STO whence afterwards
 May move the world, tho' she herself effect
 But little : wherefore up and act, nor shrink
 For fear our solid aim be dissipated
 By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had been,
 In lieu of many mortal flies, a race
 Of giants living, each, a thousand years,
 That we might see our own work out, and watch
 The sandy footprint harden into stone.'

I answer'd nothing, doubtful in myself
 If that strange Poet-princess with her grand
 Imaginations might at all be won.
 And she broke out interpreting my thoughts :

'No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you ;
 We are used to that : for women, up till this
 Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,
 Dwarfs of the gynæceum, fail so far
 In high desire, they know not, cannot guess
 How much their welfare is a passion to us.
 If we could give them surer, quicker proof—
 Oh if our end were less achievable

By slow approaches, than by single act
Of immolation, any phase of death,
We were as prompt to spring against the
pikes,
Or down the fiery gulf as talk of it,
To compass our dear sisters' liberties.'

She bow'd as if to veil a noble tear ;
And up we came to where the river sloped
To plunge in cataract, shattering on black
blocks
A breadth of thunder. O'er it shook the
woods,
And danced the colour, and, below, stuck
out
The bones of some vast bulk that lived
and roar'd
Before man was. She gazed awhile and
said,
'As these rude bones to us, are we to
her
That will be.' 'Dare we dream of that,'
I ask'd,
'Which wrought us, as the workman and
his work,
That practice betters?' 'How,' she cried,
'you love
The metaphysics ! read and earn our prize,
A golden brooch : beneath an emerald
plane

Sits Diotima, teaching him that died
Of hemlock ; our device ; wrought to the
life ;

She rapt upon her subject, he on her :
For there are schools for all.' 'And yet'
I said

'Methinks I have not found among them
all

One anatomic.' 'Nay, we thought of
that,'

She answer'd, 'but it pleased us not : in
truth

We shudder but to dream our maids
should ape

Those monstrous males that carve the
living hound,

And cram him with the fragments of the
grave,

Or in the dark dissolving human heart,
And holy secrets of this microcosm.

Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful
jest,

Encarnalize their spirits : yet we know
Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter
hangs :

Howbeit ourself, foreseeing casualty,
Nor willing men should come among us,
learnt,

For many weary moons before we came,
This craft of healing. Were you sick,
ourself

Would tend upon you. To your question
now,

Which touches on the workman and his
work.

Let there be light and there was light :
'tis so :

For was, and is, and will be, are but is ;
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light : but we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this,
now that,

And live, perforce, from thought to
thought, and make

One act a phantom of succession : thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the
shadow, Time ;

But in the shadow will we work, and
mould

The woman to the fuller day.'

She spake
With kindled eyes : we rode a league
beyond,

And, o'er a bridge of pinewood crossing,
came

On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty. 'O how sweet' I said
(For I was half-oblivious of my mask)

'To linger here with one that loved us.'
'Yea,'

She answer'd, 'or with fair philosophies
That lift the fancy ; for indeed these fields
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,
Where paced the Demigods of old, and
saw

The soft white vapour streak the crowned
towers

Built to the Sun : ' then, turning to her
maids,

'Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward ;

Lay out the viands.' At the word, they
 raised
 A tent of satin, elaborately wrought
 With fair Corinna's triumph; here she
 stood,
 Engirt with many a florid maiden-cheek,
 The woman-conqueror; woman-conquer'd
 there
 The bearded Victor of ten-thousand
 hymns,
 And all the men mourn'd at his side: but
 we
 Set forth to climb; then, climbing, Cyril
 kept
 With Psyche, with Melissa Florian, I
 With mine affianced. Many a little hand
 Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the
 rocks,
 Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
 In the dark crag: and then we turn'd,
 we wound
 About the cliffs, the corpses, out and in,
 Hammering and clinking, chattering stony
 names
 Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap
 and tuff,
 Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun
 Grew broader toward his death and fell,
 and all
 The rosy heights came out above the
 lawns.

IV.

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.
 O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.
 O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

'There sinks the nebulous star we call
 the Sun,
 If that hypothesis of theirs be sound'
 Said Ida; 'let us down and rest;' and
 we
 Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,
 By every coppice-feather'd chasm and
 cleft,
 Dropt thro' the ambrosial gloom to where
 below
 No bigger than a glow-worm shone the
 tent
 Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she lean'd
 on me,
 Descending; once or twice she lent her
 hand,
 And blissful palpitations in the blood,
 Stirring a sudden transport rose and fell.

But when we planted level feet, and
 dipt
 Beneath the satin dome and enter'd in,
 There leaning deep in broider'd down we
 sank
 Our elbows: on a tripod in the midst
 A fragrant flame rose, and before us glow'd
 Fruit, blossom, viand, amber wine, and
 gold.

Then she, 'Let some one sing to us:
 lightlier move
 The minutes fledged with music:' and a
 maid,
 Of those beside her, smote her harp, and
 sang.

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
 That brings our friends up from the underworld,
 Sad as the last which reddens over one
 That sinks with all we love below the verge;
 So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

'Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
 The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
 To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
 The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
 So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

'Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'

She ended with such passion that the
tear,
She sang of, shook and fell, an erring
pearl
Lost in her bosom: but with some disdain
Answer'd the Princess, 'If indeed there
haunt
About the moulder'd lodges of the Past
So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,
Well needs it we should cram our ears
with wool
And so pace by: but thine are fancies
hatch'd
In silken-folded idleness; nor is it
Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,
But trim our sails, and let old bygones
be,
While down the streams that float us each
and all
To the issue, goes, like glittering bergs
of ice,
Throne after throne, and molten on the
waste
Becomes a cloud: for all things serve
their time
Toward that great year of equal nights
and rights,
Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the
end
Found golden: let the past be past; let
be
Their cancell'd Babels: tho' the rough
kex break
The starr'd mosaic, and the beard-blown
goat
Hang on the shaft, and the wild figtree
split
Their monstrous idols, care not while we
hear
A trumpet in the distance pealing news
Of better, and Hope, a poisoning eagle,
burns
Above the unrisen morrow: 'then to me;
'Know you no song of your own land,' she
said,

'Not such as moans about the retrospect,
But deals with the other distance and the
hues
Of promise; not a death's-head at the
wine.'

Then I remember'd one myself had
made,
What time I watch'd the swallow wing-
ing south
From mine own land, part made long
since, and part
Now while I sang, and maidenlike as far
As I could ape their treble, did I sing.

'O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

'O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

'O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and
light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

'O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

'Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

'O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

'O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

'O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her
mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.'

I ceased, and all the ladies, each at each,
Like the Ithacensian suitors in old time,
Stared with great eyes, and laugh'd with
alien lips,
And knew not what they meant; for still
my voice
Rang false: but smiling 'Not for thee,'
she said,

'O Bulbul, any rose of Gulistan
 Shall burst her veil: marsh-divers, rather,
 maid,
 Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow-
 crake
 Grate her harsh kindred in the grass: and
 this
 A mere love-poem! O for such, my friend,
 We hold them slight: they mind us of
 the time
 When we made bricks in Egypt. Knaves
 are men,
 That lute and flute fantastic tenderness,
 And dress the victim to the offering up.
 And paint the gates of Hell with Paradise,
 And play the slave to gain the tyranny.
 Poor soul! I had a maid of honour once;
 She wept her true eyes blind for such a
 one,
 A rogue of canzonets and serenades.
 I loved her. Peace be with her. She
 is dead.
 So they blaspheme the muse! But great
 is song
 Used to great ends: ourself have often
 tried
 Valkyrian hymns, or into rhythm have
 dash'd
 The passion of the prophetess; for song
 Is duer unto freedom, force and growth
 Of spirit than to junketing and love.
 Love is it? Would this same mock-love,
 and this
 Mock-Hymen were laid up like winter
 bats,
 Till all men grew to rate us at our worth,
 Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes
 To be dandled, no, but living wills, and
 sphered
 Whole in ourselves and owed to none.
 Enough!
 But now to heaven play with profit, you,
 Know you no song, the true growth of
 your soil,
 That gives the manners of your country-
 women?'

She spoke and turn'd her sumptuous
 head with eyes
 Of shining expectation fixt on mine.

Then while I dragg'd my brains for such
 a song,
 Cyril, with whom the bell-mouth'd glass
 had wrought,
 Or master'd by the sense of sport, began
 To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch
 Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
 Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at
 him,
 I frowning; Psyche flush'd and wann'd
 and shook;
 The lilylike Melissa droop'd her brows;
 'Forbear,' the Princess cried; 'Forbear,
 Sir' I;
 And heated thro' and thro' with wrath
 and love,
 I smote him on the breast; he started
 up;
 There rose a shriek as of a city sack'd;
 Melissa clamour'd 'Flee the death;' 'To
 horse'
 Said Ida; 'home! to horse!' and fled,
 as flies
 A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,
 When some one batters at the dovecote-
 doors,
 Disorderly the women. Alone I stood
 With Florian, cursing Cyril, vext at heart,
 In the pavilion: there like parting hopes
 I heard them passing from me: hoof by
 hoof,
 And every hoof a knell to my desires,
 Clang'd on the bridge; and then another
 shriek,
 'The Head, the Head, the Princess, O
 the Head!'
 For blind with rage she miss'd the plank,
 and roll'd
 In the river. Out I sprang from glow to
 gloom:
 There whirl'd her white robe like a
 blossom'd branch
 Rapt to the horrible fall: a glance I gave,
 No more; but woman-vested as I was
 Plunged; and the flood drew; yet I
 caught her; then
 Oaring one arm, and bearing in my left
 The weight of all the hopes of half the
 world,
 Strove to buffet to land in vain. A tree

Was half-disrooted from his place and
stoop'd
To drench his dark locks in the gurgling
wave
Mid-channel. Right on this we drove
and caught,
And grasping down the boughs I gain'd
the shore.

There stood her maidens glimmeringly
group'd
In the hollow bank. One reaching
forward drew
My burthen from mine arms; they cried
'she lives :'
They bore her back into the tent : but I,
So much a kind of shame within me
wrought,
Not yet endured to meet her opening eyes,
Nor found my friends; but push'd alone
on foot
(For since her horse was lost I left her mine)
Across the woods, and less from Indian
craft
Than beelike instinct hiveward, found at
length
The garden portals. Two great statues,
Art
And Science, Caryatids, lifted up
A weight of emblem, and betwixt were
valves
Of open-work in which the hunter rued
His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows
Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon
Spread out at top, and grimly spiked the
gates.

A little space was left between the
horns,
Thro' which I clamber'd o'er at top with
pain,
Dropt on the sward, and up the linden
walks,
And, tost on thoughts that changed from
hue to hue,
Now poring on the glowworm, now the
star,
I paced the terrace, till the Bear had
wheel'd
Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.

A step
Of lightest echo, then a loftier form
Than female, moving thro' the uncertain
gloom,
Disturb'd me with the doubt 'if this
were she,'
But it was Florian. 'Hist O Hist,' he
said,
'They seek us : out so late is out of
rules.
Moreover 'seize the strangers' is the cry.
How came you here?' I told him : 'I'
said he,
'Last of the train, a moral leper, I,
To whom none spake, half-sick at heart,
return'd.
Arriving all confused among the rest
With hooded brows I crept into the hall,
And, couch'd behind a Judith, underneath
The head of Holoernes peep'd and saw.
Girl after girl was call'd to trial : each
Disclaim'd all knowledge of us : last of
all,
Melissa : trust me, Sir, I pitied her.
She, question'd if she knew us men, at
first
Was silent; closer prest, denied it not :
And then, demanded if her mother knew,
Or Psyche, she affirm'd not, or denied :
From whence the Royal mind, familiar
with her,
Easily gather'd either guilt. She sent
For Psyche, but she was not there; she
call'd
For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;
She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to
face;
And I slept out : but whither will you now?
And where are Psyche, Cyril? both are
fled :
What, if together? that were not so well.
Would rather we had never come ! I dread
His wildness, and the chances of the dark.'

'And yet,' I said, 'you wrong him more
than I
That struck him : this is proper to the
clown,
Tho' smock'd, or furr'd and purpled, still
the clown,

To harm the thing that trusts him, and to
shame

That which he says he loves: for Cyril,
howe'er

He deal in frolic, as to-night—the song
Might have been worse and sinn'd in
grosser lips

Beyond all pardon—as it is, I hold
These flashes on the surface are not he.
He has a solid base of temperament:
But as the waterlily starts and slides
Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he.'

Scarce had I ceased when from a tamarisk
near

Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying,
'Names:'

He, standing still, was clutch'd; but I
began

To thrid the musky-circled mazes, wind
And double in and out the boles, and race
By all the fountains: fleet I was of foot:
Before me shower'd the rose in flakes;
behind

I heard the puff'd pursuer; at mine ear
Bubbled the nightingale and heeded not,
And secret laughter tickled all my soul.
At last I hook'd my ankle in a vine,
That clasp'd the feet of a Mnemosyne,
And falling on my face was caught and
known.

They haled us to the Princess where
she sat

High in the hall: above her droop'd a
lamp,

And made the single jewel on her brow
Burn like the mystic fire on a mast-
head,

Prophet of storm: a handmaid on each
side

Bow'd toward her, combing out her long
black hair

Damp from the river; and close behind
her stood

Eight daughters of the plough, stronger
than men,

Huge women blowzed with health, and
wind, and rain,

And labour. Each was like a Druid rock;
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and wail'd about
with mews.

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing
clove

An advent to the throne: and therebeside,
Half-naked as if caught at once from bed
And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay
The lily-shining child; and on the left,
Bow'd on her palms and folded up from
wrong,

Her round white shoulder shaken with her
sobs,

Melissa knelt; but Lady Blanche erect
Stood up and spake, an affluent orator.

'It was not thus, O Princess, in old
days:

You prized my counsel, lived upon my
lips:

I led you then to all the Castalies;
I fed you with the milk of every Muse;
I loved you like this kneeler, and you me
Your second mother: those were gracious
times.

Then came your new friend: you began
to change—

I saw it and grieved—to slacken and to
cool;

Till taken with her seeming openness
You turn'd your warmer currents all to
her,

To me you froze: this was my meed for all.
Yet I bore up in part from ancient love,
And partly that I hoped to win you back,
And partly conscious of my own deserts,
And partly that you were my civil head,
And chiefly you were born for something
great,

In which I might your fellow-worker be,
When time should serve; and thus a noble
scheme

Grew up from seed we two long since had
sown;

In us true growth, in her a Jonah's gourd,
Up in one night and due to sudden sun:
We took this palace; but even from the
first

You stood in your own light and darken'd
 mine.
 What student came but that you planed
 her path
 To Lady Psyche, younger, not so wise,
 A foreigner, and I your countrywoman,
 I your old friend and tried, she new in all ?
 But still her lists were swell'd and mine
 were lean ;
 Yet I bore up in hope she would be known :
 Then came these wolves : *they* knew her :
they endured,
 Long-closeted with her the yestermorn,
 To tell her what they were, and she to
 hear :
 And me none told : not less to an eye like
 mine
 A lidless watcher of the public weal,
 Last night, their mask was patent, and my
 foot
 Was to you : but I thought again : I fear'd
 To meet a cold " We thank you, we shall
 hear of it
 From Lady Psyche : " you had gone to
 her,
 She told, perforce ; and winning easy grace,
 No doubt, for slight delay, remain'd
 among us
 In our young nursery still unknown, the
 stem
 Less grain than touchwood, while my
 honest heat
 Were all miscounted as malignant-haste
 To push my rival out of place and power.
 But public use required she should be
 known ;
 And since my oath was ta'en for public
 use,
 I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.
 I spoke not then at first, but watch'd them
 well,
 Saw that they kept apart, no mischief
 done ;
 And yet this day (tho' you should hate
 me for it)
 I came to tell you ; found that you had
 gone,
 Ridd'n to the hills, she likewise : now, I
 thought,
 That surely she will speak ; if not, then I :

Did she ? These monsters blazon'd what
 they were,
 According to the coarseness of their kind,
 For thus I hear ; and known at last (my
 work)
 And full of cowardice and guilty shame,
 I grant in her some sense of shame, she
 flies ;
 And I remain on whom to wreak your
 rage,
 I, that have lent my life to build up yours,
 I that have wasted here health, wealth,
 and time,
 And talent, I—you know it—I will not
 boast :
 Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,
 Divorced from my experience, will be chaff
 For every gust of chance, and men will say
 We did not know the real light, but chased
 The wisp that flickers where no foot can
 tread.'

She ceased : the Princess answer'd
 coldly, ' Good :
 Your oath is broken : we dismiss you : go.
 For this lost lamb (she pointed to the
 child)
 Our mind is changed : we take it to our-
 self.'

Thereat the Lady stretch'd a vulture
 throat,
 And shot from crooked lips a haggard
 smile.
 ' The plan was mine. I built the nest '
 she said
 ' To hatch the cuckoo. Rise ! ' and stoop'd
 to updrag
 Melissa : she, half on her mother propt,
 Half-drooping from her, turn'd her face,
 and cast
 A liquid look on Ida, full of prayer,
 Which melted Florian's fancy as she hung,
 A Niobéan daughter, one arm out,
 Appealing to the bolts of Heaven ; and
 while
 We gazed upon her came a little stir
 About the doors, and on a sudden rush'd
 Among us, out of breath, as one pursued,
 A woman-post in flying raiment. Fear

Stared in her eyes, and chalk'd her face,
and wing'd

Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell
Delivering seal'd dispatches which the
Head

Took half-amazed, and in her lion's mood
Tore open, silent we with blind surmise
Regarding, while she read, till over brow
And cheek and bosom brake the wrath-
ful bloom

As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
When the wild peasant rights himself, the
rick

Flames, and his anger reddens in the
heavens ;

For anger most it seem'd, while now her
breast,

Beaten with some great passion at her
heart,

Palpitated, her hand shook, and we heard
In the dead hush the papers that she held
Rustle : at once the lost lamb at her feet
Sent out a bitter bleating for its dam ;
The plaintive cry jarr'd on her ire ; she
crush'd

The scrolls together, made a sudden turn
As if to speak, but, utterance failing her,
She whirl'd them on to me, as who should
say

'Read,' and I read—two letters—one her
sire's.

'Fair daughter, when we sent the
Prince your way

We knew not your ungracious laws, which
learnt,

We, conscious of what temper you are
built,

Came all in haste to hinder wrong, but fell
Into his father's hands, who has this night,
You lying close upon his territory,
Slipt round and in the dark invested you,
And here he keeps me hostage for his son.'

The second was my father's running
thus :

'You have our son : touch not a hair of
his head :

Render him up unscathed : give him your
hand :

Cleave to your contract : tho' indeed we
hear

You hold the woman is the better man ;
A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their
Lords

Thro' all the world, and which might well
deserve

That we this night should pluck your
palace down ;

And we will do it, unless you send us back
Our son, on the instant, whole.'

So far I read ;
And then stood up and spoke impetuously.

'O not to pry and peer on your reserve,
But led by golden wishes, and a hope
The child of regal compact, did I break
Your precinct ; not a scorner of your sex
But venerator, zealous it should be
All that it might be : hear me, for I bear,
Tho' man, yet human, whatsoe'er your
wrongs,

From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a
life

Less mine than yours : my nurse would
tell me of you ;

I babbled for you, as babies for the moon,
Vague brightness ; when a boy, you stoop'd
to me

From all high places, lived in all fair lights,
Came in long breezes rapt from inmost
south

And blown to inmost north ; at eve and
dawn

With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods ;
The leader wildswan in among the stars
Would clang it, and lapt in wreaths of
glowworm light

The mellow breaker murmur'd Ida. Now,
Because I would have reach'd you, had
you been

Sphered up with Cassiopëia, or the en-
throned

Persephonè in Hades, now at length,
Those winters of abeyance all worn out,
A man I came to see you : but, indeed,
Not in this frequency can I lend full
tongue,

O noble Ida, to those thoughts that wait

On you, their centre : let me say but this,
That many a famous man and woman,
town

And landskip, have I heard of, after seen
The dwarfs of presage : tho' when known,
there grew

Another kind of beauty in detail
Made them worth knowing ; but in you
I found

My boyish dream involved and dazzled
down

And master'd, while that after-beauty
makes

Such head from act to act, from hour to
hour,

Within me, that except you slay me here,
According to your bitter statute-book,

I cannot cease to follow you, as they say
The seal does music ; who desire you
more

Than growing boys their manhood ; dy-
ing lips,

With many thousand matters left to do,
The breath of life ; O more than poor
men wealth,

Than sick men health—yours, yours, not
mine—but half

Without you ; with you, whole ; and of
those halves

You worthiest ; and howe'er you block
and bar

Your heart with system out from mine, I
hold

That it becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clench'd antagonisms

To follow up the worthiest till he die :
Yet that I came not all unauthorized

Behold your father's letter.'

On one knee
Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught,
and dash'd

Unopen'd at her feet : a tide of fierce
Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,

As waits a river level with the dam
Ready to burst and flood the world with
foam :

And so she would have spoken, but there
rose

A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together: from the illumined hall

Long lanes of splendour slanted o'er a
press

Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded
ewes,

And rainbow robes, and gems and gem-
like eyes,

And gold and golden heads ; they to and
fro

Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red,
some pale,

All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the
land,

And some that men were in the very
walls,

And some they cared not ; till a clamour
grew

As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded : high above them
stood

The placid marble Muses, looking peace.

Not peace she look'd, the Head : but
rising up

Robed in the long night of her deep hair,
so

To the open window moved, remaining
there

Fixt like a beacon-tower above the waves
Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye
Glares ruin, and the wild birds on the
light

Dash themselves dead. She stretch'd
her arms and call'd

Across the tumult and the tumult fell.

'What fear ye, brawlers? am not I
your Head?

On me, me, me, the storm first breaks :
I dare

All these male thunderbolts : what is it
ye fear?

Peace ! there are those to avenge us and
they come :

If not,—myself were like enough, O girls,
To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,
And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,
Or, falling, protomartyr of our cause,
Die : yet I blame you not so much for
fear ;

Six thousand years of fear have made you
that
From which I would redeem you : but
for those
That stir this hubbub—you and you—I
know
Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow
morn
We hold a great convention : then shall
they
That love their voices more than duty,
learn
With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame
to live
No wiser than their mothers, household
stuff,
Live chattels, mincers of each other's
fame,
Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks
of Time,
Whose brains are in their hands and in
their heels,
But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to
thrum,
To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to
scour,
For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.'

She, ending, waved her hands : thereat
the crowd
Muttering, dissolved : then with a smile,
that look'd
A stroke of cruel sunshine on the cliff,
When all the glens are drown'd in azure
gloom
Of thunder-shower, she floated to us and
said :

'You have done well and like a
gentleman,
And like a prince : you have our thanks
for all :
And you look well too in your woman's
dress :
Well have you done and like a gentleman.
You saved our life : we owe you bitter
thanks :
Better have died and spilt our bones in
the flood—

Then men had said—but now—What
hinders me
To take such bloody vengeance on you
both?—
Yet since our father—Wasps in our good
hive,
You would-be quenchers of the light to
be,
Barbarians, grosser than your native
bears—
O would I had his sceptre for one hour !
You that have dared to break our bound,
and gull'd
Our servants, wrong'd and lied and
thwarted us—
I wed with thee ! I bound by precontract
Your bride, your bonds slave ! not tho' all
the gold
That veins the world were pack'd to
make your crown,
And every spoken tongue should lord
you. Sir,
Your falsehood and yourself are hateful
to us :
I trample on your offers and on you :
Begone : we will not look upon you more.
Here, push them out at gates.'

In wrath she spake.
Then those eight mighty daughters of the
plough
Bent their broad faces toward us and
address'd
Their motion : twice I sought to plead
my cause,
But on my shoulder hung their heavy
hands,
The weight of destiny : so from her face
They push'd us, down the steps, and
thro' the court,
And with grim laughter thrust us out at
gates.

We cross'd the street and gain'd a petty
mound
Beyond it, whence we saw the lights and
heard
The voices murmuring. While I listen'd,
came
On a sudden the weird seizure and the
doubt :

I seem'd to move among a world of
ghosts ;

The Princess with her monstrous woman-
guard,

The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and the tumult and the kings
Were shadows ; and the long fantastic
night

With all its doings had and had not been,
And all things were and were not.

This went by
As strangely as it came, and on my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy ;
Not long ; I shook it off ; for spite of
doubts

And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one
To whom the touch of all mischance but
came

As night to him that sitting on a hill
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway
sun

Set into sunrise ; then we moved away.

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands ;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands :
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee ;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

So Lilia sang : we thought her half-
possess'd,

She struck such warbling fury thro' the
words ;

And, after, feigning pique at what she
call'd

The raiillery, or grotesque, or false sub-
lime—

Like one that wishes at a dance to change
The music—clapt her hands and cried
for war,

Or some grand fight to kill and make an
end :

And he that next inherited the tale
Half turning to the broken statue, said,
' Sir Ralph has got your colours : if I
prove

Your knight, and fight your battle, what
for me ?'

It chanced, her empty glove upon the
tomb

Lay by her like a model of her hand.

She took it and she flung it. ' Fight '
she said,

' And make us all we would be, great
and good.'

He knightlike in his cap instead of casque,
A cap of Tyrol borrow'd from the hall,
Arranged the favour, and assumed the
Prince.

v.

Now, scarce three paces measured from
the mound,

We stumbled on a stationary voice,
And ' Stand, who goes ?' ' Two from the
palace' I.

' The second two : they wait,' he said,
' pass on ;

His Highness wakes : ' and one, that
clash'd in arms,

By glimmering lanes and walls of canvas
led

Threading the soldier-city, till we heard
The drowsy folds of our great ensign
shake

From blazon'd lions o'er the imperial tent
Whispers of war.

Entering, the sudden light
Dazed me half-blind : I stood and seem'd
to hear,

As in a poplar grove when a light wind
wakes

A lisping of the innumerable leaf and dies,
Each hissing in his neighbour's ear ; and
then

A strangled titter, out of which there
brake

On all sides, clamouring etiquette to
death,

Unmeasured mirth ; while now the two
old kings

Began to wag their baldness up and down,
The fresh young captains flash'd their
glittering teeth,

The huge bush-bearded Barons heaved
and blew,

And slain with laughter roll'd the gilded
Squire.

At length my Sire, his rough cheek
wet with tears,
Panted from weary sides 'King, you are
free!

We did but keep you surety for our son,
If this be he,—or a dragged mawkin,
thou,
That tends her bristled grunterns in the
sludge:'

For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn
with briars,

More crumpled than a poppy from the
sheath,

And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to
heel.

Then some one sent beneath his vaulted
palm

A whisper'd jest to some one near him,
'Look,

He has been among his shadows.' 'Satan
take

The old women and their shadows! (thus
the King

Roar'd) make yourself a man to fight with
men.

Go: Cyril told us all.'

As boys that slink

From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,
Away we stole, and transient in a trice

From what was left of faded woman-
slough

To sheathing splendours and the golden
scale

Of harness, issued in the sun, that now
Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the

Earth,

And hit the Northern hills. Here Cyril
met us.

A little shy at first, but by and by
We twain, with mutual pardon ask'd and

given
For stroke and song, resolder'd peace,
whereon

Follow'd his tale. Amazed he fled away
Thro' the dark land, and later in the night

Had come on Psyche weeping: 'then we
fell

Into your father's hand, and there she
lies,

But will not speak, nor stir.'

He show'd a tent
A stone-shot off: we enter'd in, and there
Among piled arms and rough accoutre-
ments,

Pitiful sight, wrapp'd in a soldier's cloak,
Like some sweet sculpture draped from
head to foot,

And push'd by rude hands from its
pedestal,

All her fair length upon the ground she
lay:

And at her head a follower of the camp,
A charr'd and wrinkled piece of woman-
hood,

Sat watching like a watcher by the dead.

Then Florian knelt, and 'Come' he
whisper'd to her,

'Lift up your head, sweet sister: lie not
thus.

What have you done but right? you could
not slay

Me, nor your prince: look up: be com-
forted:

Sweet is it to have done the thing one ought,
When fall'n in darker ways.' And like-
wise I:

'Be comforted: have I not lost her too,
In whose least act abides the nameless
charm

That none has else for me?' She heard,
she moved,

She moan'd, a folded voice; and up she
sat,

And raised the cloak from brows as pale
and smooth

As those that mourn half-shrouded over
death

In deathless marble. 'Her,' she said,
'my friend—

Parted from her—betray'd her cause and
mine—

Where shall I breathe? why kept ye not
your faith?

O base and bad! what comfort? none
for me!'

To whom remorseful Cyril, 'Yet I pray
Take comfort: live, dear lady, for your
child!'

At which she lifted up her voice and cried,

'Ah me, my babe, my blossom, ah, my
 child,
 My one sweet child, whom I shall see no
 more !
 For now will cruel Ida keep her back ;
 And either she will die from want of care,
 Or sicken with ill-usage, when they say
 The child is hers—for every little fault,
 The child is hers ; and they will beat my
 girl
 Remembering her mother: O my flower !
 Or they will take her, they will make her
 hard,
 And she will pass me by in after-life
 With some cold reverence worse than
 were she dead.
 Ill mother that I was to leave her there,
 To lag behind, scared by the cry they
 made,
 The horror of the shame among them all:
 But I will go and sit beside the doors,
 And make a wild petition night and day,
 Until they hate to hear me like a wind
 Wailing for ever, till they open to me,
 And lay my little blossom at my feet,
 My babe, my sweet Aglaia, my one child:
 And I will take her up and go my way,
 And satisfy my soul with kissing her:
 Ah ! what might that man not deserve of
 me
 Who gave me back my child?' 'Be
 comforted,'
 Said Cyril, 'you shall have it:' but again
 She veil'd her brows, and prone she sank,
 and so
 Like tender things that being caught feign
 death,
 Spoke not, nor stirr'd.
 By this a murmur ran
 Thro' all the camp and inward raced the
 scouts
 With rumour of Prince Arac hard at hand.
 We left her by the woman, and without
 Found the gray kings at parle: and 'Look
 you' cried
 My father 'that our compact be fulfill'd:
 You have spoilt this child ; she laughs at
 you and man:
 She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and
 him:

But red-faced war has rods of steel and
 fire ;
 She yields, or war.'
 Then Gama turn'd to me:
 'We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy
 time
 With our strange girl: and yet they say
 that still
 You love her. Give us, then, your mind
 at large:
 How say you, war or not?'
 'Not war, if possible,
 O king,' I said, 'lest from the abuse of
 war,
 The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,
 The smouldering homestead, and the
 household flower
 Torn from the lintel—all the common
 wrong—
 A smoke go up thro' which I loom to her
 Three times a monster: now she lightens
 scorn
 At him that mars her plan, but then
 would hate
 (And every voice she talk'd with ratify it,
 And every face she look'd on justify it)
 The general foe. More soluble is this
 knot,
 By gentleness than war. I want her love.
 What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd
 Your cities into shards with catapults,
 She would not love;—or brought her
 chain'd, a slave,
 The lifting of whose eyelash is my lord,
 Not ever would she love; but brooding
 turn
 The book of scorn, till all my flitting
 chance
 Were caught within the record of her
 wrongs,
 And crush'd to death: and rather, Sire,
 than this
 I would the old God of war himself were
 dead,
 Forgotten, rusting on his iron hills,
 Rotting on some wild shore with ribs of
 wreck,
 Or like an old-world mammoth bulk'd in
 ice,
 Not to be molten out.'

And roughly spake
My father, 'Tut, you know them not, the
girls.

Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think
That idiot legend credible. Look you,
Sir!

Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
The sleek and shining creatures of the
chase,

We hunt them for the beauty of their
skins;

They love us for it, and we ride them
down.

Wheedling and siding with them! Out!
for shame!

Boy, there's no rose that's half so dear to
them

As he that does the thing they dare not do,
Breathing and sounding beauteous battle,
comes

With the air of the trumpet round him,
and leaps in

Among the women, snares them by the
score

Flatter'd and fluster'd, wins, tho' dash'd
with death

He reddens what he kisses: thus I won
Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,
Worth winning; but this firebrand—
gentleness

To such as her! if Cyril spake her true,
To catch a dragon in a cherry net,
To trip a tigress with a gossamer,
Were wisdom to it.

'Yea but Sire,' I cried,
'Wild natures need wise curbs. The
soldier? No:

What dares not Ida do that she should
prize

The soldier? I beheld her, when she rose
The yesternight, and storming in extremes,
Stood for her cause, and flung defiance
down

Gagelike to man, and had not shunn'd the
death,

No, not the soldier's: yet I hold her, king,
True woman: but you clash them all in
one,

That have as many differences as we.
The violet varies from the lily as far

As oak from elm: one loves the soldier,
one

The silken priest of peace, one this, one
that,

And some unworthily; their sinless faith,
A maiden moon that sparkles on a sty,
Glorifying clown and satyr; whence they
need

More breadth of culture: is not Ida right?
They worth it? truer to the law within?
Severer in the logic of a life?

Twice as magnetic to sweet influences
Of earth and heaven? and she of whom
you speak,

My mother, looks as whole as some serene
Creation minted in the golden moods
Of sovereign artists; not a thought, a
touch,

But pure as lines of green that streak the
white

Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves; I say,
Not like the piebald miscellany, man,
Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual
mire,

But whole and one: and take them all-
in-all,

Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,
As truthful, much that Ida claims as right
Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly
theirs

As dues of Nature. To our point: not
war:

Lest I lose all.'

'Nay, nay, you spake but sense
Said Gama. 'We remember love ourself
In our sweet youth; we did not rate him
then

This red-hot iron to be shaped with blows.
You talk almost like Ida: *she* can talk;
And there is something in it as you say:
But you talk kindlier: we esteem you for
it.—

He seems a gracious and a gallant Prince,
I would he had our daughter: for the rest,
Our own detention, why, the causes
weigh'd,

Fatherly fears—you used us courteously—
We would do much to gratify your Prince—
We pardon it; and for your ingress here
Upon the skirt and fringe of our fair land,

You did but come as goblins in the night,
 Nor in the furrow broke the ploughman's
 head,
 Nor burnt the grange, nor buss'd the
 milking-maid,
 Nor robb'd the farmer of his bowl of
 cream :
 But let your Prince (our royal word upon it,
 He comes back safe) ride with us to our
 lines,
 And speak with Arac : Arac's word is thrice
 As ours with Ida : something may be
 done—
 I know not what—and ours shall see us
 friends.
 You, likewise, our late guests, if so you
 will,
 Follow us : who knows? we four may
 build some plan
 Foursquare to opposition.'

Here he reach'd

White hands of farewell to my sire, who
 growl'd
 An answer which, half-muffled in his
 beard,
 Let so much out as gave us leave to go.

Then rode we with the old king across
 the lawns
 Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of
 Spring
 In every bole, a song on every spray
 Of birds that piped their Valentines, and
 woke
 Desire in me to infuse my tale of love
 In the old king's ears, who promised help,
 and oozed
 All o'er with honey'd answer as we rode
 And blossom-fragrant slipt the heavy
 dews
 Gather'd by night and peace, with each
 light air
 On our mail'd heads : but other thoughts
 than Peace
 Burnt in us, when we saw the embattled
 squares,
 And squadrons of the Prince, trampling
 the flowers
 With clamour : for among them rose a cry
 As if to greet the king ; they made a halt ;

The horses yell'd ; they clash'd their arms ;
 the drum
 Beat ; merrily-blowing shrill'd the martial
 fife ;
 And in the blast and bray of the long
 horn
 And serpent-throated bugle, undulated
 The banner : anon to meet us lightly
 pranced
 Three captains out ; nor ever had I seen
 Such thews of men : the midmost and the
 highest
 Was Arac : all about his motion clung
 The shadow of his sister, as the beam
 Of the East, that play'd upon them, made
 them glance
 Like those three stars of the airy Giant's
 zone,
 That glitter burnish'd by the frosty dark ;
 And as the fiery Sirius alters hue,
 And bickers into red and emerald, shone
 Their morions, wash'd with morning, as
 they came.

And I that prated peace, when first I
 heard
 War-music, felt the blind wildbeast of
 force,
 Whose home is in the sinews of a man,
 Stir in me as to strike : then took the king
 His three broad sons ; with now a wander-
 ing hand
 And now a pointed finger, told them all :
 A common light of smiles at our disguise
 Broke from their lips, and, ere the windy
 jest
 Had labour'd down within his ample lungs,
 The genial giant, Arac, roll'd himself
 Thrice in the saddle, then burst out in
 words.

' Our land invaded, 'sdeath ! and he
 himself
 Your captive, yet my father wills not war :
 And, 'sdeath ! myself, what care I, war
 or no ?
 But then this question of your troth re-
 mains :
 And there's a downright honest meaning
 in her ;

She flies too high, she flies too high ! and yet

She ask'd but space and fairplay for her scheme ;

She prest and prest it on me—I myself,
What know I of these things ? but, life
and soul !

I thought her half-right talking of her wrongs ;

I say she flies too high, 'sdeath ! what of that ?

I take her for the flower of womankind,
And so I often told her, right or wrong,
And, Prince, she can be sweet to those
she loves,

And, right or wrong, I care not : this is all,

I stand upon her side : she made me swear it—

'Sdeath—and with solemn rites by candle-light—

Swear by St. something—I forget her name—

Her that talk'd down the fifty wisest men ;
She was a princess too ; and so I swore.
Come, this is all ; she will not : waive
your claim :

If not, the foughten field, what else, at once

Decides it, 'sdeath ! against my father's will.'

I lagg'd in answer loth to render up
My precontract, and loth by brainless war
To cleave the rift of difference deeper
yet ;

Till one of those two brothers, half aside
And fingering at the hair about his lip,
To prick us on to combat ' Like to like !
The woman's garment hid the woman's
heart.'

A taunt that clench'd his purpose like a blow !

For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,
And sharp I answer'd, touch'd upon the point

Where idle boys are cowards to their shame,

' Decide it here : why not ? we are three
to three.'

Then spake the third ' But three to three ? no more ?

No more, and in our noble sister's cause ?
More, more, for honour : every captain
waits

Hungry for honour, angry for his king.
More, more, some fifty on a side, that each
May breathe himself, and quick ! by over-
throw

Of these or those, the question settled die.'

' Yea,' answer'd I, ' for this wild wreath
of air,

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam of men's deeds—this honour, if ye
will.

It needs must be for honour if at all :
Since, what decision ? if we fail, we fail,
And if we win, we fail : she would not
keep

Her compact.' ' 'Sdeath ! but we will
send to her,'

Said Arac, ' worthy reasons why she should
Bide by this issue : let our missive thro',
And you shall have her answer by the
word.'

' Boys !' shriek'd the old king, but
vainlier than a hen

To her false daughters in the pool ; for
none

Regarded ; neither seem'd there more to
say :

Back rode we to my father's camp, and
found

He thrice had sent a herald to the gates,
To learn if *Ida* yet would cede our claim,
Or by denial flush her babbling wells
With her own people's life : three times
he went :

The first, he blew and blew, but none
appear'd :

He batter'd at the doors ; none came :
the next,

An awful voice within had warn'd him
thence :

The third, and those eight daughters of
the plough

Came sallying thro' the gates, and caught
his hair,

And so belabour'd him on rib and cheek
They made him wild : not less one glance
he caught

Thro' open doors of Ida station'd there
Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm
Tho' compass'd by two armies and the
noise

Of arms ; and standing like a stately Pine
Set in a cataract on an island-crag,
When storm is on the heights, and right
and left

Suck'd from the dark heart of the long
hills roll

The torrents, dash'd to the vale : and yet
her will

Bred will in me to overcome it or fall.

But when I told the king that I was
pledged

To fight in tourney for my bride, he
clash'd

His iron palms together with a cry ;
Himself would tilt it out among the lads :
But overborne by all his bearded lords
With reasons drawn from age and state,
perforce

He yielded, wroth and red, with fierce
demur :

And many a bold knight started up in heat,
And sware to combat for my claim till
death.

All on this side the palace ran the field
Flat to the garden-wall : and likewise
here,

Above the garden's glowing blossom-belts,
A column'd entry shone and marble stairs,
And great bronze valves, emboss'd with
Tomyris

And what she did to Cyrus after fight,
But now fast barr'd : so here upon the flat
All that long morn the lists were hammer'd
up,

And all that morn the heralds to and fro,
With message and defiance, went and
came ;

Last, Ida's answer, in a royal hand,
But shaken here and there, and rolling
words

Oration-like. I kiss'd it and I read.

'O brother, you have known the pangs
we felt,

What heats of indignation when we heard
Of those that iron-cramp'd their women's
feet ;

Of lands in which at the altar the poor
bride

Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a
scourge ;

Of living hearts that crack within the fire
Where smoulder their dead despots ; and
of those,—

Mothers,—that, all prophetic pity, fling
Their pretty maids in the running flood,
and swoops

The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart
Made for all noble motion : and I saw
That equal baseness lived in sleeker times
With smoother men : the old leaven
leaven'd all :

Millions of throats would bawl for civil
rights,

No woman named : therefore I set my
face

Against all men, and lived but for mine
own.

Far off from men I built a fold for them :
I stored it full of rich memorial :

I fenced it round with gallant institutes,
And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey
And prosper'd ; till a rout of saucy boys
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd
our peace,

Mask'd like our maids, blustering I know
not what

Of insolence and love, some pretext held
Of baby troth, invalid, since my will
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings !—for
their sport !—

I tamed my leopards : shall I not tame
these ?

Or you ? or I ? for since you think me
touch'd

In honour—what, I would not aught of
false—

Is not our cause pure ? and whereas I
know

Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's
blood

You draw from, fight ; you failing, I abide

What end soever: fail you will not. Still
 Take not his life: he risk'd it for my own;
 His mother lives: yet whatsoe'er you do,
 Fight and fight well; strike and strike
 home. O dear
 Brothers, the woman's Angel guards you,
 you
 The sole men to be mingled with our
 cause,
 The sole men we shall prize in the after-
 time,
 Your very armour hallow'd, and your
 status
 Rear'd, sung to, when, this gad-fly brush'd
 aside,
 We plant a solid foot into the Time,
 And mould a generation strong to move
 With claim on claim from right to right,
 till she
 Whose name is yoked with children's,
 know herself;
 And Knowledge in our own land make
 her free,
 And, ever following those two crowned
 twins,
 Commerce and conquest, shower the fiery
 grain
 Of freedom broadcast over all that orbs
 Between the Northern and the Southern
 morn.'

Then came a postscript dash'd across
 the rest.
 'See that there be no traitors in your
 camp:
 We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust
 Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague
 of men!
 Almost our maids were better at their
 homes,
 Than thus man-girdled here: indeed I
 think
 Our chiefest comfort is the little child
 Of one unworthy mother; which she left:
 She shall not have it back: the child
 shall grow
 To prize the authentic mother of her mind.
 I took it for an hour in mine own bed
 This morning: there the tender orphan
 hands

Felt at my heart, and seem'd to charm
 from thence
 The wrath I nursed against the world:
 farewell.'

I ceased; he said, 'Stubborn, but she
 may sit
 Upon a king's right hand in thunder-
 storms,
 And breed up warriors! See now, tho'
 yourself
 Be dazzled by the wildfire Love to sloughs
 That swallow common sense, the spind-
 ling king,
 This Gama swamp'd in lazy tolerance.
 When the man wants weight, the woman
 takes it up,
 And topples down the scales; but this is
 fixt
 As are the roots of earth and base of all;
 Man for the field and woman for the
 hearth:
 Man for the sword and for the needle she:
 Man with the head and woman with the
 heart:
 Man to command and woman to obey;
 All else confusion. Look you! the gray
 mare
 Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
 From tile to scullery, and her small good-
 man
 Shrinks in his arm-chair while the fires
 of Hell
 Mix with his hearth: but you—she's yet
 a colt—
 Take, break her: strongly groom'd and
 straitly curb'd
 She might not rank with those detestable
 That let the bantling scald at home, and
 brawl
 Their rights or wrongs like potherbs in
 the street.
 They say she's comely; there's the fairer
 chance:
 I like her none the less for rating at her!
 Besides, the woman wed is not as we,
 But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace
 Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,
 The bearing and the training of a child
 Is woman's wisdom.'

Thus the hard old king :
 I took my leave, for it was nearly noon :
 I pored upon her letter which I held,
 And on the little clause 'take not his life :'
 I mused on that wild morning in the
 woods,
 And on the 'Follow, follow, thou shalt
 win :'
 I thought on all the wrathful king had
 said,
 And how the strange betrothment was to
 end :
 Then I remember'd that burnt sorcerer's
 curse
 That one should fight with shadows and
 should fall ;
 And like a flash the weird affection came :
 King, camp and college turn'd to hollow
 shows ;
 I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts,
 And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,
 To dream myself the shadow of a dream :
 And ere I woke it was the point of noon,
 The lists were ready. Empanoplied and
 plumed
 We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there
 Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared
 At the barrier like a wild horn in a land
 Of echoes, and a moment, and once more
 The trumpet, and again : at which the
 storm
 Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of
 spears
 And riders front to front, until they closed
 In conflict with the crash of shivering
 points,
 And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream, I
 dream'd
 Of fighting. On his haunches rose the
 steed,
 And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,
 And out of stricken helmetssprang the fire.
 Part sat like rocks : part reel'd but kept
 their seats :
 Part roll'd on the earth and rose again
 and drew :
 Part stumbled mixt with floundering
 horses. Down
 From those two bulks at Arac's side, and
 down

From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,
 The large blows rain'd, as here and every-
 where
 He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing
 lists,
 And all the plain,—brand, mace, and
 shaft, and shield—
 Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil
 bang'd
 With hammers ; till I thought, can this
 be he
 From Gama's dwarfish loins ? if this be so,
 The mother makes us most—and in my
 dream
 I glanced aside, and saw the palace-front
 Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies'
 eyes,
 And highest, among the statues, statue-
 like,
 Between a cymbal'd Miriam and a Jael,
 With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,
 A single band of gold about her hair,
 Like a Saint's glory up in heaven : but
 she
 No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—
 Too hard, too cruel : yet she sees me
 fight,
 Yea, let her see me fall ! with that I drave
 Among the thickest and bore down a
 Prince,
 And Cyril, one. Yea, let me make my
 dream
 All that I would. But that large-moulded
 man,
 His visage all agrin as at a wake,
 Made at me thro' the press, and, stagger-
 ing back
 With stroke on stroke the horse and
 horseman, came
 As comes a pillar of electric cloud,
 Flaying the roofs and sucking up the
 drains,
 And shadowing down the champaign till
 it strikes
 On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and
 cracks, and splits,
 And twists the grain with such a roar
 that Earth
 Reels, and the herdsmen cry ; for every-
 thing

Gave way before him : only Florian, he
 That loved me closer than his own right
 eye,
 Thrust in between ; but Arac rode him
 down :
 And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the
 Prince,
 With Psyche's colour round his helmet,
 tough,
 Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at
 arms ;
 But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that
 smote
 And threw him : last I spurr'd ; I felt
 my veins
 Stretch with fierce heat ; a moment hand
 to hand,
 And sword to sword, and horse to horse
 we hung,
 Till I struck out and shouted ; the blade
 glanced,
 I did but shear a feather, and dream and
 truth
 Flow'd from me ; darkness closed me ;
 and I fell.

VI.

Home they brought her warrior dead :
 She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry :
 All her maidens, watching, said,
 'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
 Call'd him worthy to be loved,
 Truest friend and noblest foe ;
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
 Lightly to the warrior stept,
 Took the face-cloth from the face ;
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee—
 Like summer tempest came her tears—
 'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

My dream had never died or lived
 again.

As in some mystic middle state I lay ;
 Seeing I saw not, hearing not I heard :
 Tho', if I saw not, yet they told me all
 So often that I speak as having seen.

For so it seem'd, or so they said to me,
 That all things grew more tragic and
 more strange ;
 That when our side was vanquish'd and
 my cause
 For ever lost, there went up a great cry,
 The Prince is slain. My father heard
 and ran
 In on the lists, and there unlaced my
 casque
 And grovell'd on my body, and after him
 Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglaïa.

But high upon the palace Ida stood
 With Psyche's babe in arm : there on the
 roofs
 Like that great dame of Lapidoth she
 sang.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : the seed,
 The little seed they laugh'd at in the dark,
 Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
 Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
 A thousand arms and rushes to the Sun.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 came ;
 The leaves were wet with women's tears : they
 heard
 A noise of songs they would not understand :
 They mark'd it with the red cross to the fall,
 And would have strown it, and are fall'n them-
 selves.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 came,
 The woodmen with their axes : lo the tree !
 But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
 And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,
 And boats and bridges for the use of men.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 struck ;
 With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor
 knew
 There dwelt an iron nature in the grain :
 The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
 Their arms were shatter'd to the shoulder blade.

'Our enemies have fall'n, but this shall grow
 A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
 Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power : and roll'd
 With music in the growing breeze of Time,
 The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
 Shall move the stony bases of the world.

'And now, O maids, behold our
 sanctuary
 Is violate, our laws broken : fear we not
 To break them more in their behoof,
 whose arms
 Champion'd our cause and won it with a
 day
 Blanch'd in our annals, and perpetual feast,
 When dames and heroines of the golden
 year
 Shall strip a hundred hollows bare of
 Spring,
 To rain an April of ovation round
 Their statues, borne aloft, the three : but
 come,
 We will be liberal, since our rights are
 won.
 Let them not lie in the tents with coarse
 mankind,
 Ill nurses ; but descend, and proffer these
 The brethren of our blood and cause, that
 there
 Lie bruised and maim'd, the tender
 ministries
 Of female hands and hospitality.'

She spoke, and with the babe yet in
 her arms,
 Descending, burst the great bronze valves,
 and led
 A hundred maids in train across the Park.
 Some cowl'd, and some bare-headed, on
 they came,
 Their feet in flowers, her loveliest : by
 them went
 The enamour'd air sighing, and on their
 curls
 From the high tree the blossom wavering
 fell,
 And over them the tremulous isles of light
 Slided, they moving under shade : but
 Blanche
 At distance follow'd : so they came : anon
 Thro' open field into the lists they wound
 Timorously ; and as the leader of the
 herd
 That holds a stately fretwork to the Sun,
 And follow'd up by a hundred airy does,
 Steps with a tender foot, light as on air,
 The lovely, lordly creature floated on

To where her wounded brethren lay ;
 there stay'd ;
 Knelt on one knee,—the child on one,—
 and prest
 Their hands, and call'd them dear de-
 liverers,
 And happy warriors, and immortal names,
 And said ' You shall not lie in the tents
 but here,
 And nursed by those for whom you fought,
 and served
 With female hands and hospitality.'

Then, whether moved by this, or was
 it chance,
 She past my way. Up started from my
 side
 The old lion, glaring with his whelpless
 eye,
 Silent ; but when she saw me lying stark,
 Dishelm'd and mute, and motionlessly
 pale,
 Cold ev'n to her, she sigh'd ; and when
 she saw
 The haggard father's face and reverend
 beard
 Of grisly twine, all dabbled with the blood
 Of his own son, shudder'd, a twitch of pain
 Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead
 past
 A shadow, and her hue changed, and she
 said :
 ' He saved my life : my brother slew him
 for it.'
 No more : at which the king in bitter
 scorn
 Drew from my neck the painting and the
 tress,
 And held them up : she saw them, and a
 day
 Rose from the distance on her memory,
 When the good Queen, her mother, shore
 the tress
 With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche :
 And then once more she look'd at my pale
 face :
 Till understanding all the foolish work
 Of Fancy, and the bitter close of all,
 Her iron will was broken in her mind ;
 Her noble heart was molten in her breast ;

She bow'd, she set the child on the earth ;
 she laid
 A feeling finger on my brows, and
 presently
 'O Sire,' she said, 'he lives : he is not
 dead :

O let me have him with my brethren here
 In our own palace : we will tend on him
 Like one of these ; if so, by any means,
 To lighten this great clog of thanks, that
 make
 Our progress falter to the woman's goal.'

She said : but at the happy word 'he
 lives '
 My father stoop'd, re-father'd o'er my
 wounds.

So those two foes above my fallen life,
 With brow to brow like night and evening
 mixt
 Their dark and gray, while Psyche ever
 stole

A little nearer, till the babe that by us,
 Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden
 brede,

Lay like a new-fall'n meteor on the grass,
 Uncared for, spied its mother and began
 A blind and babbling laughter, and to
 dance

Its body, and reach its fatling innocent
 arms

And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal
 Brook'd not, but clamouring out 'Mine—
 mine—not yours,

It is not yours, but mine : give me the
 child'

Ceased all on tremble : piteous was the
 cry :

So stood the unhappy mother open-
 mouth'd,

And turn'd each face her way : wan was
 her cheek

With hollow watch, her blooming mantle
 torn,

Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,
 And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and
 half

The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst
 The laces toward her babe ; but she nor
 cared

Nor knew it, clamouring on, till Ida heard,
 Look'd up, and rising slowly from me,
 stood

Erect and silent, striking with her glance
 The mother, me, the child ; but he that
 lay

Beside us, Cyril, batter'd as he was,
 Trail'd himself up on one knee : then he
 drew

Her robe to meet his lips, and down she
 look'd

At the arm'd man sideways, pitying as it
 seem'd,

Or self-involved ; but when she learnt his
 face,

Remembering his ill-omen'd song, arose
 Once more thro' all her height, and o'er
 hint grew

Tall as a figure lengthen'd on the sand
 When the tide ebbs in sunshine, and he
 said :

'O fair and strong and terrible !
 Lioness

That with your long locks play the Lion's
 mane !

But Love and Nature, these are two more
 terrible

And stronger. See, your foot is on our
 necks,

We vanquish'd, you the Victor of your
 will.

What would you more? give her the
 child ! remain

Orb'd in your isolation : he is dead,
 Or all as dead : henceforth we let you be :
 Win you the hearts of women ; and
 beware

Lest, where you seek the common love
 of these,

The common hate with the revolving
 wheel

Should drag you down, and some great
 Nemesis

Break from a darken'd future, crown'd
 with fire,

And tread you out for ever : but how-
 soe'er

Fix'd in yourself, never in your own arms
 To hold your own, deny not hers to her

Give her the child ! O if, I say, you keep
 One pulse that beats true woman, if you
 loved
 The breast that fed or arm that dandled
 you,
 Or own one port of sense not flint to
 prayer,
 Give her the child ! or if you scorn to
 lay it,
 Yourself, in hands so lately claspt with
 yours,
 Or speak to her, your dearest, her one
 fault
 The tenderness, not yours, that could not
 kill,
 Give *me* it : *I* will give it her.'

He said :

At first her eye with slow dilation roll'd
 Dry flame, she listening ; after sank and
 sank

And, into mournful twilight mellowing,
 dwelt

Full on the child ; she took it : ' Pretty
 bud !

Lily of the vale ! half open'd bell of the
 woods !

Sole comfort of my dark hour, when a
 world

Of traitorous friend and broken system
 made

No purple in the distance, mystery,
 Pledge of a love not to be mine, farewell ;

These men are hard upon us as of old,
 We two must part : and yet how fain
 was I

To dream thy cause embraced in mine,
 to think

I might be something to thee, when I felt
 Thy helpless warmth about my barren
 breast

In the dead prime : but may thy mother
 prove

As true to thee as false, false, false to me !
 And, if thou needs must bear the yoke,

I wish it
 Gentle as freedom '—here she kiss'd it :
 then—

' All good go with thee ! take it Sir,'
 and so

Laid the soft babe in his hard-mailed hands,

Who turn'd half-round to Psyche as she
 sprang

To meet it, with an eye that swum in
 thanks ;

Then felt it sound and whole from head
 to foot,

And hugg'd and never hugg'd it close
 enough,

And in her hunger mouth'd and mumbled
 it,

And hid her bosom with it ; after that
 Put on more calm and added suppliantly :

' We two were friends : I go to mine
 own land

For ever : find some other : as for me
 I scarce am fit for your great plans : yet
 speak to me,

Say one soft word and let me part for-
 given.'

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.
 Then Arac. ' Ida—'sdeath ! you blame
 the man ;

You wrong yourselves—the woman is so
 hard

Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me !
 I am your warrior : I and mine have fought
 Your battle : kiss her ; take her hand,
 she weeps :

'Sdeath ! I would sooner fight thrice o'er
 than see it.'

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground,
 And reddening in the furrows of his chin,
 And moved beyond his custom, Gama
 said :

' I've heard that there is iron in the
 blood,

And I believe it. Not one word ? not one ?
 Whence drew you this steel temper ? not
 from me,

Not from your mother, now a saint with
 saints.

She said you had a heart—I heard her
 say it—

" Our Ida has a heart"—just ere she died—
 " But see that some one with authority

Be near her still " and I—I sought for
 one—

All people said she had authority—
 The Lady Blanche : much profit ! Not
 one word ;
 No ! tho' your father sues : see how you
 stand
 Stiff as Lot's wife, and all the good
 knights maim'd,
 I trust that there is no one hurt to death,
 For your wild whim : and was it then
 for this,
 Was it for this we gave our palace up,
 Where we withdrew from summer heats
 and state,
 And had our wine and chess beneath the
 planes,
 And many a pleasant hour with her that's
 gone,
 Ere you were born to vex us ? Is it kind ?
 Speak to her I say : is this not she of
 whom,
 When first she came, all flush'd you said
 to me
 Now had you got a friend of your own
 age,
 Now could you share your thought ; now
 should men see
 Two women faster welded in one love
 Than pairs of wedlock ; she you walk'd
 with, she
 You talk'd with, whole nights long, up
 in the tower,
 Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,
 And right ascension, Heaven knows what ;
 and now
 A word, but one, one little kindly word,
 Not one to spare her : out upon you,
 flint !
 You love nor her, nor me, nor any ; nay,
 You shame your mother's judgment too.
 Not one ?
 You will not ? well—no heart have you,
 or such
 As fancies like the vermin in a nut
 Have fretted all to dust and bitterness.'
 So said the small king moved beyond his
 wont.

But Ida stood nor spoke, drain'd of her
 force
 By many a varying influence and so long.

Down thro' her limbs a drooping languor
 wept :
 Her head a little bent ; and on her mouth
 A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded
 moon
 In a still water : then brake out my sire,
 Lifting his grim head from my wounds.
 'O you,
 Woman, whom we thought woman even
 now,
 And were half fool'd to let you tend our son,
 Because he might have wish'd it—but we
 see
 The accomplice of your madness unfor-
 given,
 And think that you might mix his draught
 with death,
 When your skies change again : the
 rougher hand
 Is safer : on to the tents : take up the
 Prince.'

 He rose, and while each ear was prick'd
 to attend
 A tempest, thro' the cloud that dimm'd
 her broke
 A genial warmth and light once more,
 and shone
 Thro' glittering drops on her sad friend.
 'Come hither.
 O Psyche,' she cried out, 'embrace me,
 come,
 Quick while I melt ; make reconcilment
 sure
 With one that cannot keep her mind an
 hour :
 Come to the hollow heart they slander so !
 Kiss and be friends, like children being
 chid !
 I seem no more : I want forgiveness too :
 I should have had to do with none but
 maids,
 That have no links with men. Ah false
 but dear,
 Dear traitor, too much loved, why ?—
 why ?—Yet see,
 Before these kings we embrace you yet
 once more
 With all forgiveness, all oblivion,
 And trust, not love, you less.

And now, O sire,
 Grant me your son, to nurse, to wait upon
 him,
 Like mine own brother. For my debt to
 him,
 This nightmare weight of gratitude, I
 know it;
 Taunt me no more: yourself and yours
 shall have
 Free adit; we will scatter all our maids
 Till happier times each to her proper
 hearth:
 What use to keep them here—now?
 grant my prayer.
 Help, father, brother, help; speak to the
 king:
 Thaw this male nature to some touch of
 that
 Which kills me with myself, and drags
 me down
 From my fixt height to mob me up with all
 The soft and milky rabble of womankind,
 Poor weakling ev'n as they are.'
 Passionate tears
 Follow'd: the king replied not: Cyril
 said:
 'Your brother, Lady,—Florian,—ask for
 him
 Of your great head—for he is wounded
 too—
 That you may tend upon him with the
 prince.'
 'Ay so,' said Ida with a bitter smile,
 'Our laws are broken: let him enter
 too.'
 Then Violet, she that sang the mournful
 song,
 And had a cousin tumbled on the plain,
 Petition'd too for him. 'Ay so,' she said,
 'I stagger in the stream: I cannot keep
 My heart an eddy from the brawling
 hour:
 We break our laws with ease, but let it
 be.'
 'Ay so?' said Blanche: 'Amazed am I
 to hear
 Your Highness: but your Highness
 breaks with ease
 The law your Highness did not make:
 'twas I.

T

I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,
 And block'd them out; but these men
 came to woo
 Your Highness—verily I think to win.'

So she, and turn'd askance a wintry eye:
 But Ida with a voice, that like a bell
 Toll'd by an earthquake in a trembling
 tower,
 Rang ruin, answer'd full of grief and scorn.

'Fling our doors wide! all, all, not
 one, but all,
 Not only he, but by my mother's soul,
 Whatever man lies wounded, friend or
 foe,
 Shall enter, if he will. Let our girls flit,
 Till the storm die! but had you stood by
 us,
 The roar that breaks the Pharos from his
 base
 Had left us rock. She fain would sting
 us too,
 But shall not. Pass, and mingle with
 your likes.
 We brook no further insult but are gone.'

She turn'd; the very nape of her white
 neck
 Was rosed with indignation: but the
 Prince
 Her brother came; the king her father
 charm'd
 Her wounded soul with words: nor did
 mine own
 Refuse her proffer, lastly gave his hand.

Then us they lifted up, dead weights,
 and bare
 Straight to the doors: to them the doors
 gave way
 Groaning, and in the Vestal entry shriek'd
 The virgin marble under iron heels:
 And on they moved and gain'd the hall,
 and there
 Rested: but great the crush was, and
 each base,
 To left and right, of those tall columns
 drown'd
 In silken fluctuation and the swarm
 Of female whisperers: at the further end

P

Was Ida by the throne, the two great cats
Close by her, like supporters on a shield,
Bow-back'd with fear : but in the centre
stood

The common men with rolling eyes ;
amazed

They glared upon the women, and aghast
The women stared at these, all silent,
save

When armour clash'd or jingled, while
the day,

Descending, struck athwart the hall, and
shot

A flying splendour out of brass and steel,
That o'er the statues leapt from head to
head,

Now fired an angry Pallas on the helm,
Now set a wrathful Dian's moon on flame,
And now and then an echo started up,
And shuddering fled from room to room,
and died

Of fright in far apartments.

Then the voice
Of Ida sounded, issuing ordinance :
And me they bore up the broad stairs,
and thro'

The long-laid galleries past a hundred
doors

To one deep chamber shut from sound,
and due

To languid limbs and sickness ; left me
in it ;

And others elsewhere they laid ; and all
That afternoon a sound arose of hoof
And chariot, many a maiden passing home
Till happier times ; but some were left of
those

Held sagest, and the great lords out and in,
From those two hosts that lay beside the
walls,

Walk'd at their will, and everything was
changed.

VII.

Ask me no more : the moon may draw the sea ;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the
shape

With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape ;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee ?

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more : what answer should I give ?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye :

Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die !
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live ;

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more : thy fate and mine are seal'd :

I strove against the stream and all in vain :
Let the great river take me to the main :

No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield ;
Ask me no more.

So was their sanctuary violated,
So their fair college turn'd to hospital ;
At first with all confusion : by and by
Sweet order lived again with other laws :
A kindlier influence reign'd ; and every-
where

Low voices with the ministering hand
Hung round the sick : the maidens came,
they talk'd,

They sang, they read : till she not fair
began

To gather light, and she that was, became
Her former beauty treble ; and to and fro
With books, with flowers, with Angel
offices,

Like creatures native unto gracious act,
And in their own clear element, they
moved.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,
And hatred of her weakness, blent with
shame.

Old studies fail'd ; seldom she spoke :
but oft

Clomb to the roofs, and gazed alone for
hours

On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men
Darkening her female field : void was her
use,

And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, and sees a great
black cloud

Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of
night,

Blot out the slope of sea from verge to
shore,

And suck the blinding splendour from the
sand,

And quenching lake by lake and tarn by
tarn

Expunge the world : so fared she gazing
there ;
So blacken'd all her world in secret,
blank
And waste it seem'd and vain ; till down
she came,
And found fair peace once more among
the sick.

And twilight dawn'd ; and morn by
morn the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres,
but I
Lay silent in the muffled cage of life :
And twilight gloom'd ; and broader-grown
the bowers
Drew the great night into themselves,
and Heaven,
Star after star, arose and fell ; but I,
Deeper than those weird doubts could
reach me, lay
Quite sunder'd from the moving Universe,
Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the
hand
That nursed me, more than infants in
their sleep.

But Psyche tended Florian : with her
oft,
Melissa came ; for Blanche had gone, but
left
Her child among us, willing she should
keep
Court-favour : here and there the small
bright head,
A light of healing, glanced about the
couch,
Or thro' the parted silks the tender face
Peep'd, shining in upon the wounded man
With blush and smile, a medicine in
themselves
To wile the length from languorous hours,
and draw
The sting from pain ; nor seem'd it strange
that soon
He rose up whole, and those fair charities
Join'd at her side ; nor stranger seem'd
that hearts
So gentle, so employ'd, should close in
love,

Than when two dewdrops on the petal
shake
To the same sweet air, and tremble deeper
down,
And slip at once all-fragrant into one.

Less prosperously the second suit ob-
tain'd
At first with Psyche. Not tho' Blanche
had sworn
That after that dark night among the fields
She needs must wed him for her own good
name ;
Not tho' he built upon the babe restored ;
Nor tho' she liked him, yielded she, but
fear'd
To incense the Head once more ; till on
a day
When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind
Seen but of Psyche : on her foot she hung
A moment, and she heard, at which her
face
A little flush'd, and she past on ; but each
Assumed from thence a half-consent in-
volved
In stillness, plighted troth, and were at
peace.

Nor only these : Love in the sacred halls
Held carnival at will, and flying struck
With showers of random sweet on maid
and man.
Nor did her father cease to press my claim,
Nor did mine own, now reconciled ; nor yet
Did those twin brothers, risen again and
whole ;
Nor Arac, satiate with his victory.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat :
Then came a change ; for sometimes I
would catch
Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,
And fling it like a viper off, and shriek
'You are not Ida ;' clasp it once again,
And call her Ida, tho' I knew her not,
And call her sweet, as if in irony,
And call her hard and cold which seem'd
a truth :
And still she fear'd that I should lose my
mind,

And often she believed that I should die:
Till out of long frustration of her care,
And pensive tendance in the all-weary
 noons,
And watches in the dead, the dark, when
 clocks
Throbb'd thunder thro' the palace floors,
 or call'd
On flying Time from all their silver
 tongues—

And out of memories of her kindlier days,
And sidelong glances at my father's grief,
And at the happy lovers heart in heart—
And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
And lonely listenings to my mutter'd
 dream,
And often feeling of the helpless hands,
And wordless broodings on the wasted
 cheek—

From all a closer interest flourish'd up,
Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to
 these,

Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with
 tears

By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gather'd colour day by day.

• Last I woke sane, but well-nigh close
 to death

For weakness: it was evening: silent light
Slept on the painted walls, wherein were
 wrought

Two grand designs; for on one side arose
The women up in wild revolt, and storm'd
At the Oppian law. Titanic shapes, they
 cramm'd

The forum, and half-crush'd among the
 rest

A dwarf-like Cato cower'd. On the other
 side

Hortensia spoke against the tax; behind,
A train of dames: by axe and eagle sat,
With all their foreheads drawn in Roman
 scowls,

And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their
 veins,

The fierce triumvirs; and before them
 paused

Hortensia pleading: angry was her face.

I saw the forms: I knew not where I
 was:

They did but look like hollow shows;
 nor more

Sweet Ida: palm to palm she sat: the dew
Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape
And rounder seem'd: I moved: I sigh'd:
 a touch

Came round my wrist, and tears upon my
 hand:

Then all for languor and self-pity ran
Mine down my face, and with what life I
 had,

And like a flower that cannot all unfold,
So drench'd it is with tempest, to the sun.
Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her
Fixt my faint eyes, and utter'd whisper-
 ingly:

‘If you be, what I think you, some
 sweet dream,

I would but ask you to fulfil yourself:
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
I ask you nothing: only, if a dream,
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die
 to-night.

Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I
 die.’

I could no more, but lay like one in
 trance,

That hears his burial talk'd of by his
 friends,

And cannot speak, nor move, nor make
 one sign,

But lies and dreads his doom. She turn'd;
 she paused;

She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a
 cry;

Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of
 death;

And I believed that in the living world
My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
Till back I fell, and from mine arms she
 rose

Glowing all over noble shame; and all
Her falser self slipt from her like a robe
And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
Than in her mould that other, when she
 came

From barren deeps to conquer all with
love ;
And down the streaming crystal dropt ;
and she
Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
Naked, a double light in air and wave,
To meet her Graces, where they deck'd
her out
For worship without end ; nor end of mine,
Stateliest, for thee ! but mute she glided
forth,
Nor glanced behind her, and I sank and
slept,
Fill'd thro' and thro' with Love, a happy
sleep.

Deep in the night I woke : she, near
me, held
A volume of the Poets of her land :
There to herself, all in low tones, she
read.

'Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white ;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk ;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font :
The fire-fly wakens : waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Dánaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake :
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.'

I heard her turn the page ; she found
a small
Sweet Idyl, and once more, as low, she
read :

'Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain
height :

What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills ?
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down

And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :
But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley ; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air :
So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vales
Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.'

So she low-toned ; while with shut
eyes I lay
Listening ; then look'd. Pale was the
perfect face ;
The bosom with long sighs labour'd ; and
meek
Seem'd the full lips, and mild the lumi-
nous eyes,
And the voice trembled and the hand.

She said
Brokenly, that she knew it, she had fail'd
In sweet humility ; had fail'd in all ;
That all her labour was but as a block
Left in the quarry ; but she still were loth,
She still were loth to yield herself to one
That wholly scorn'd to help their equal
rights
Against the sons of men, and barbarous
laws.

She pray'd me not to judge their cause
from her
That wrong'd it, sought far less for truth
than power
In knowledge : something wild within
her breast,
A greater than all knowledge, beat her
down.
And she had nursed me there from week
to week :

Much had she learnt in little time. ' In
part

It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts: yet was she but a girl—
' Ah fool, and made myself a Queen of
farce !

When comes another such? never, I think,
Till the Sun drop, dead, from the signs.'

Her voice
Choked, and her forehead sank upon her
hands,

And her great heart thro' all the faultful
Past

Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not
break ;

Till notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light :
She moved, and at her feet the volume
fell.

' Blame not thyself too much,' I said,
' nor blame

Too much the sons of men and barbarous
laws ;

These were the rough ways of the world
till now.

Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that
know

The woman's cause is man's: they rise
or sink

Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or
free :

For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with
man

His nights, his days, moves with him to
one goal,

Stays all the fair young planet in her
hands—

If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more
alone !

Our place is much : as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding
her—

Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her
down—

Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelop't man,
But diverse : could we make her as the
man,

Sweet Love were slain : his dearest bond
is this,

Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
The man be more of woman, she of man ;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw
the world ;

She mental breadth, nor fail in childward
care,

Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind ;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words ;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of
Time,

Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their
powers,

Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,

But like each other ev'n as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to
men :

Then reign the world's great bridal, s,
chaste and calm :

Then springs the crowning race of human-
kind.

May these things be !'

Sighing she spoke ' I fear
They will not.'

' Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watch-
word rest

Of equal ; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal : each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in
thought,

Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one
full stroke,
Life.'

CONCLUSION.

So closed our tale, of which I give you
all

The random scheme as wildly as it rose :
The words are mostly mine ; for when
we ceased

There came a minute's pause, and Walter
said,

'I wish she had not yielded !' then to me,
'What, if you drest it up poetically !'

So pray'd the men, the women : I gave
assent :

Yet how to bind the scatter'd scheme of
seven

Together in one sheaf? What style could
suit ?

The men required that I should give
throughout

The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,
With which we banter'd little Lilia first :
The women—and perhaps they felt their
power,

For something in the ballads which they
sang,

Or in their silent influence as they sat,
Had ever seem'd to wrestle with burlesque,
And drove us, last, to quite a solemn
close—

They hated banter, wish'd for something
real,

A gallant fight, a noble princess—why
Not make her true-heroic—true-sublime ?
Or all, they said, as earnest as the close ?
Which yet with such a framework scarce
could be.

Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
Betwixt the mockers and the realists :
And I, betwixt them both, to please them
both,

And yet to give the story as it rose,
I moved as in a strange diagonal,
And maybe neither pleased myself nor
them.

But Lilia pleased me, for she took no
part

In our dispute : the sequel of the tale
Had touch'd her ; and she sat, she
pluck'd the grass,

She flung it from her, thinking : last, she
fixt

A showery glance upon her aunt, and said,
'You—tell us what we are' who might
have told,

For she was cramm'd with theories out
of books,

But that there rose a shout : the gates
were closed

At sunset, and the crowd were swarming
now,

To take their leave, about the garden
rails.

So I and some went out to these : we
climb'd

The slope to Vivian-place, and turnings saw
The happy valleys, half in light, and half
Far-shadowing from the west, a land of
peace ;

Gray halls alone among their massive
groves ;

Trim hamlets ; here and there a rustic
tower

Half-lost in belts of hop and breadths of
wheat ;

The shimmering glimpses of a stream ;
the seas ;

A red sail, or a white ; and far beyond,
Imagined more than seen, the skirts of
France.

'Look there, a garden !' said my
college friend,

The Tory member's elder son, 'and
there !

God bless the narrow sea which keeps
her off,

And keeps our Britain, whole within
herself,

A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled—
Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
Some reverence for the laws ourselves
have made,

Some patient force to change them when
we will,

Some civic manhood firm against the
crowd—

But yonder, whiff ! there comes a sudden
heat,

The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
The king is scared, the soldier will not
fight,

The little boys begin to shoot and stab,
A kingdom topples over with a shriek
Like an old woman, and down rolls the
world

In mock heroics stranger than our own ;
Revolts, republics, revolutions, most
No graver than a schoolboys' barring
out ;

Too comic for the solemn things they
are,

Too solemn for the comic touches in
them,

Like our wild Princess with as wise a
dream

As some of theirs—God bless the narrow
seas !

I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad.'

'Have patience,' I replied, 'ourselves
are full

Of social wrong ; and maybe wildest
dreams

Are but the needful preludes of the truth :
For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,
The sport half-science, fill me with a
faith.

This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the go-cart. Patience ! Give it
time

To learn its limbs : there is a hand that
guides.'

In such discourse we gain'd the garden
rails,

And there we saw Sir Walter where he
stood,

Before a tower of crimson holly-hoaks,
Among six boys, head under head, and
look'd

No little lily-handed Baronet he,
A great broad-shoulder'd genial English-
man,

A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep,
A raiser of huge melons and of pine,
A patron of some thirty charities,
A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none ;

Fair-hair'd and redder than a windy
morn ;

Now shaking hands with him, now him,
of those

That stood the nearest—now address'd
to speech—

Who spoke few words and pithy, such as
closed

Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the
year

To follow : a shout rose again, and made
The long line of the approaching rookery
swerve

From the elms, and shook the branches
of the deer

From slope to slope thro' distant ferns,
and rang

Beyond the bourn of sunset ; O, a shout
More joyful than the city-roar that hails
Premier or king ! Why should not these
great Sirs

Give up their parks some dozen times a
year

To let the people breathe ? So thrice
they cried,

I likewise, and in groups they stream'd
away.

But we went back to the Abbey, and
sat on,

So much the gathering darkness charm'd :
we sat

But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,
Perchance upon the future man : the
walls

Blacken'd about us, bats wheel'd, and
owls whoop'd,

And gradually the powers of the night,
That range above the region of the wind,
Deepening the courts of twilight broke
them up

Thro' all the silent spaces of the worlds,
Beyond all thought into the Heaven of
Heavens.

Last little Lilia, rising quietly,
Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir
Ralph

From those rich silks, and home well-
pleased we went.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

PUBLISHED IN 1852.

I.

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a
mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II.

Where shall we lay the man whom we
deplere?
Here, in streaming London's central roar,
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III.

Lead out the pageant : sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it
grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow ;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV.

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the
Past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute :
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, reso-
lute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,

And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good gray head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men
drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds
that blew !
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be
seen no more.

V.

All is over and done :
Render thanks to the Giver,
England, for thy son.
Let the bell be toll'd.
Render thanks to the Giver,
And render him to the mould.
Under the cross of gold
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever
Among the wise and the bold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a reverent people behold
The towering car, the sable steeds :
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
Dark in its funeral fold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a deeper knell in the heart be
knoll'd ;
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem
roll'd
Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;
And the volleying cannon thunder his
loss ;
He knew their voices of old.
For many a time in many a clime
His captain's-ear has heard them boom
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom :
When he with those deep voices wrought,
Guarding realms and kings from shame ;
With those deep voices our dead captain
taught
The tyrant, and asserts his claim
In that dread sound to the great name,
Which he has worn so pure of blame,
In praise and in dispraise the same,

A man of well-attemper'd frame.
 O civic muse, to such a name,
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name,
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI.

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd
 guest,
 With banner and with music, with soldier
 and with priest,
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on
 my rest ?
 Mighty Seaman, this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea.
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous
 man,
 The greatest sailor since our world began.
 Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
 To thee the greatest soldier comes ;
 For this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea ;
 His foes were thine ; he kept us free ;
 O give him welcome, this is he
 Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
 And worthy to be laid by thee ;
 For this is England's greatest son,
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,
 Nor ever lost an English gun ;
 This is he that far away
 Against the myriads of Assaye
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won ;
 And underneath another sun,
 Warring on a later day,
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew
 The treble works, the vast designs
 Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
 Where he greatly stood at bay,
 Whence he issued forth anew,
 And ever great and greater grew,
 Beating from the wasted vines
 Back to France her banded swarms,
 Back to France with countless blows,
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
 Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
 Follow'd up in valley and glen
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
 Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
 And England pouring on her foes.

Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing
 wings,
 And barking for the thrones of kings ;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler
 down ;
 A day of onsets of despair !
 Dash'd on every rocky square
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves
 away ;
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew ;
 Thro' the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
 And down we swept and charged and
 overthrew.

So great a soldier taught us there,
 What long-enduring hearts could do
 In that world-earthquake, Waterloo !
 Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine,
 If love of country move thee there at all,
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by
 thine !
 And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice,
 The proof and echo of all human fame,
 A people's voice, when they rejoice
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 Attest their great commander's claim
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to
 him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

VII.

A people's voice ! we are a people yet.
 Tho' all men else their nobler dreams
 forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless
 Powers ;
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly
 set
 His Briton in blown seas and storming
 showers,

We have a voice, with which to pay the
 debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and re-
 gret
 To those great men who fought, and kept
 it ours.
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute
 control ;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye,
 the soul
 Of Europe, keep our noble England
 whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom
 sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
 That sober freedom out of which there
 springs
 Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ;
 For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
 Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
 And drill the raw world for the march of
 mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane and crowns
 be just.
 But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
 Remember him who led your hosts ;
 He bad you guard the sacred coasts.
 Your cannons moulder on the seaward
 wall ;
 His voice is silent in your council-hall
 For ever ; and whatever tempests lour
 For ever silent ; even if they broke
 In thunder, silent ; yet remember all
 He spoke among you, and the Man who
 spoke ;
 Who never sold the truth to serve the
 hour,
 Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power ;
 Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
 Thro' either babbling world of high and
 low ;
 Whose life was work, whose language rife
 With rugged maxims hewn from life ;
 Who never spoke against a foe ;
 Whose eighty winters freeze with one
 rebuke
 All great self-seekers trampling on the
 right :
 Truth-teller was our England's Alfred
 named ;

Truth-lover was our English Duke ;
 Whatever record leap to light
 He never shall be shamed.

VIII.

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great,
 But as he saves or serves the state.
 Not once or twice in our rough island-
 story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory :
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory :
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has
 won
 His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty
 scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and
 sun.
 Such was he : his work is done.
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman
 pure :
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory :
 And let the land whose hearths he saved
 from shame
 For many and many an age proclaim
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illuminated cities
 flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,

With honour, honour, honour, honour to
him,
Eternal honour to his name.

IX.

Peace, his triumph will be sung
By some yet unmoulded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see :
Peace, it is a day of pain
For one about whose patriarchal knee
Late the little children clung :
O peace, it is a day of pain
For one, upon whose hand and heart and
brain

Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
Ours the pain, be his the gain !
More than is of man's degree
Must be with us, watching here
At this, our great solemnity.
Whom we see not we revere ;
We revere, and we refrain
From talk of battles loud and vain,
And brawling memories all too free
For such a wise humility
As befits a solemn fane :
We revere, and while we hear
The tides of Music's golden sea
Setting toward eternity,
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
Until we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo,
And Victor he must ever be.
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will ;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads
roll

Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul ?
On God and Godlike men we build our
trust.

Hush, the Dead March wails in the
people's ears :

The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs
and tears :

The black earth yawns: the mortal
disappears ;

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ;

He is gone who seem'd so great.—
Gone ; but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.

1852.

THE THIRD OF FEBRUARY,
1852.

My Lords, we heard you speak : you told
us all

That England's honest censure went
too far ;

That our free press should cease to brawl,
Not sting the fiery Frenchman into
war.

It was our ancient privilege, my Lords,
To fling whate'er we felt, not fearing, into
words.

We love not this French God, the child
of Hell,

Wild War, who breaks the converse of
the wise ;

But though we love kind Peace so well,
We dare not ev'n by silence sanction
lies.

It might be safe our censures to withdraw ;
And yet, my Lords, not well : there is a
higher law.

As long as we remain, we must speak free,
Tho' all the storm of Europe on us
break ;

No little German state are we,

But the one voice in Europe : we *must*
speak ;

That if to-night our greatness were struck
dead,

There might be left some record of the
things we said.

If you be fearful, then must we be bold.
 Our Britain cannot salve a tyrant o'er.
 Better the waste Atlantic roll'd
 On her and us and ours for evermore.
 What ! have we fought for Freedom from
 our prime,
 At last to dodge and palter with a public
 crime ?

Shall we fear *him* ? our own we never
 fear'd.
 From our first Charles by force we
 wrung our claims.
 Prick'd by the Papal spur, we rear'd,
 We flung the burthen of the second
 James.
 I say, we *never* feared ! and as for these,
 We broke them on the land, we drove
 them on the seas.

And you, my Lords, you make the people
 muse
 In doubt if you be of our Barons' breed—
 Were those your sires who fought at
 Lewes ?
 Is this the manly strain of Runnymede ?
 O fall'n nobility, that, overawed,
 Would lisp in honey'd whispers of this
 monstrous fraud !

We feel, at least, that silence here were sin,
 Not ours the fault if we have feeble
 hosts—
 If easy patrons of their kin
 Have left the last free race with naked
 coasts !
 They knew the precious things they had
 to guard :
 For us, we will not spare the tyrant one
 hard word.

Tho' niggard throats of Manchester may
 bawl,
 What England was, shall her true sons
 forget ?
 We are not cotton-spinners all,
 But some love England and her honour
 yet.
 And these in our Thermopylæ shall stand,
 And hold against the world this honour
 of the land.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

I.

HALF a league, half a league,
 Half a league onward,
 All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
 'Forward, the Light Brigade !
 Charge for the guns !' he said :
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

II.

'Forward, the Light Brigade !'
 Was there a man dismay'd ?
 Not tho' the soldier knew
 Some one had blunder'd :
 Their's not to make reply,
 Their's not to reason why,
 Their's but to do and die :
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

III.

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon in front of them
 Volley'd and thunder'd ;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 Boldly they rode and well,
 Into the jaws of Death,
 Into the mouth of Hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
 Flash'd as they turn'd in air
 Sabring the gunners there,
 Charging an army, while
 All the world wonder'd :
 Plunged in the battery-smoke
 Right thro' the line they broke ;
 Cossack and Russian
 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.
 Then they rode back, but not
 Not the six hundred.

v.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd ;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI.

When can their glory fade ?
O the wild charge they made !
All the world wonder'd,
Honour the charge they made !
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred !

ODE SUNG AT THE OPENING
OF THE INTERNATIONAL
EXHIBITION.

I.

UPLIFT a thousand voices full and sweet,
In this wide hall with earth's invention
stored,
And praise the invisible universal Lord,
Who lets once more in peace the nations
meet,
Where Science, Art, and Labour have
outpour'd
Their myriad horns of plenty at our feet.

II.

O silent father of our Kings to be
Mourn'd in this golden hour of jubilee,
For this, for all, we weep our thanks to
thee !

III.

The world-compelling plan was thine,—
And, lo ! the long laborious miles
Of Palace ; lo ! the giant aisles,
Rich in model and design ;
Harvest-tool and husbandry,
Loom and wheel and enginery,

Secrets of the sullen mine,
 Steel and gold, and corn and wine,
 Fabric rough, or fairy-fine,
 Sunny tokens of the Line,
 Polar marvels, and a feast
 Of wonder, out of West and East,
 And shapes and hues of Art divine !
 All of beauty, all of use,
 That one fair planet can produce,
 Brought from under every star,
 Blown from over every main,
 And mixt, as life is mixt with pain,
 The works of peace with works of war.

IV.

Is the goal so far away?
Far, how far no tongue can say,
Let us dream our dream to-day.

V.

O ye, the wise who think, the wise who
 reign,
From growing commerce loose her latest
 chain,
And let the fair white-wing'd peacemaker
 fly
To happy havens under all the sky,
And mix the seasons and the golden
 hours ;
Till each man find his own in all men's
 good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood,
Breaking their mailed fleets and armed
 towers,
And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
And gathering all the fruits of earth and
 crown'd with all her flowers.

A WELCOME TO ALEXANDRA.

MARCH 7, 1863.

SEA-KINGS' daughter from over the sea,
Alexandra !
Saxon and Norman and Dane are we,
But all of us Danes in our welcome of
thee, Alexandra !
Welcome her, thunders of fort and of fleet !
Welcome her, thundering cheer of the
street !

IV.

And Love has led thee to the stranger
land,

Where men are bold and strongly say
their say ;—

See, empire upon empire smiles to-
day,

As thou with thy young lover hand in
hand

Alexandrovna !

So now thy fuller life is in the west,

Whose hand at home was gracious to
thy poor :

Thy name was blest within the narrow
door ;

Here also, Marie, shall thy name be blest,

Marie Alexandrovna !

V.

Shall fears and jealous hatreds flame again ?

Or at thy coming, Princess, every-
where,

The blue heaven break, and some
diviner air

Breathe thro' the world and change the
hearts of men,

Alexandrovna ?

But hearts that change not, love that
cannot cease,

And peace be yours, the peace of soul
in soul !

And howsoever this wild world may roll,
Between your peoples truth and manful
peace,

Alfred—Alexandrovna !

THE GRANDMOTHER.

I.

AND Willy, my eldest-born, is gone, you say, little Anne ?

Ruddy and white, and strong on his legs, he looks like a man.

And Willy's wife has written : she never was over-wise,
Never the wife for Willy : he wouldn't take my advice.

II.

For, Annie, you see, her father was not the man to save,

Hadn't a head to manage, and drank himself into his grave.

Pretty enough, very pretty ! but I was against it for one.

Eh !—but he wouldn't hear me—and Willy, you say, is gone.

III.

Willy, my beauty, my eldest-born, the flower of the flock ;

Never a man could fling him : for Willy stood like a rock.

'Here's a leg for a babe of a week !' says doctor ; and he would be bound,

There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round.

IV.

Strong of his hands, and strong on his legs, but still of his tongue !

I ought to have gone before him : I wonder he went so young.

I cannot cry for him, Annie : I have not long to stay ;

Perhaps I shall see him the sooner, for he lived far away.

V.

Why do you look at me, Annie ? you think I am hard and cold ;

But all my children have gone before me, I am so old :

I cannot weep for Willy, nor can I weep for the rest ;

Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

VI.

For I remember a quarrel I had with your father, my dear,
All for a slanderous story, that cost me many a tear.
I mean your grandfather, Annie : it cost me a world of woe,
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

VII.

For Jenny, my cousin, had come to the place, and I knew right well
That Jenny had tript in her time : I knew, but I would not tell.
And she to be coming and slandering me, the base little liar !
But the tongue is a fire as you know, my dear, the tongue is a fire.

VIII.

And the parson made it his text that week, and he said likewise,
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright.
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.

IX.

And Willy had not been down to the farm for a week and a day ;
And all things look'd half-dead, tho' it was the middle of May.
Jenny, to slander me, who knew what Jenny had been !
But soiling another, Annie, will never make oneself clean.

X.

And I cried myself well-nigh blind, and all of an evening late
I climb'd to the top of the garth, and stood by the road at the gate.
The moon like a rick on fire was rising over the dale,
And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me chirrup the nightingale.

XI.

All of a sudden he stopt : there past by the gate of the farm,
Willy,—he didn't see me,—and Jenny hung on his arm.
Out into the road I started, and spoke I scarce knew how ;
Ah, there's no fool like the old one—it makes me angry now.

XII.

Willy stood up like a man, and look'd the thing that he meant ;
Jenny, the viper, made me a mocking curtesy and went.
And I said, ' Let us part : in a hundred years it'll all be the same,
You cannot love me at all, if you love not my good name.'

XIII.

And he turn'd, and I saw his eyes all wet, in the sweet moonshine :
' Sweetheart, I love you so well that your good name is mine.
And what do I care for Jane, let her speak of you well or ill ;
But marry me out of hand : we two shall be happy still.'

XIV.

'Marry you, Willy !' said I, 'but I needs must speak my mind,
And I fear you'll listen to tales, be jealous and hard and unkind.'
But he turn'd and claspt me in his arms, and answer'd, 'No, love, no ;'
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

XV.

So Willy and I were wedded : I wore a lilac gown ;
And the ringers rang with a will, and he gave the ringers a crown.
But the first that ever I bare was dead before he was born,
Shadow and shine is life, little Annie, flower and thorn.

XVI.

That was the first time, too, that ever I thought of death.
There lay the sweet little body that never had drawn a breath.
I had not wept, little Anne, not since I had been a wife ;
But I wept like a child that day, for the babe had fought for his life.

XVII.

His dear little face was troubled, as if with anger or pain :
I look'd at the still little body—his trouble had all been in vain.
For Willy I cannot weep, I shall see him another morn :
But I wept like a child for the child that was dead before he was born.

XVIII.

But he cheer'd me, my good man, for he seldom said me nay :
Kind, like a man, was he ; like a man, too, would have his way :
Never jealous—not he : we had many a happy year ;
And he died, and I could not weep—my own time seem'd so near.

XIX.

But I wish'd it had been God's will that I, too, then could have died :
I began to be tired a little, and fain had slept at his side.
And that was ten years back, or more, if I don't forget :
But as to the children, Annie, they're all about me yet.

XX.

Pattering over the boards, my Annie who left me at two,
Patter she goes, my own little Annie, an Annie like you :
Pattering over the boards, she comes and goes at her will,
While Harry is in the five-acre and Charlie ploughing the hill.

XXI.

And Harry and Charlie, I hear them too—they sing to their team :
Often they come to the door in a pleasant kind of a dream.
They come and sit by my chair, they hover about my bed—
I am not always certain if they be alive or dead.

XXII.

And yet I know for a truth, there's none of them left alive ;
 For Harry went at sixty, your father at sixty-five :
 And Willy, my eldest-born, at nigh threescore and ten ;
 I knew them all as babies, and now they're elderley men.

XXIII.

For mine is a time of peace, it is not often I grieve ;
 I am oftener sitting at home in my father's farm at eve :
 And the neighbours come and laugh and gossip, and so do I ;
 I find myself often laughing at things that have long gone by.

XXIV.

To be sure the preacher says, our sins should make us sad :
 But mine is a time of peace, and there is Grace to be had ;
 And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life shall cease ;
 And in this Book, little Annie, the message is one of Peace.

XXV.

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from pain,
 And happy has been my life ; but I would not live it again.
 I seem to be tired a little, that's all, and long for rest ;
 Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

XXVI.

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my flower ;
 But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour,—
 Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next ;
 I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be vext ?

XXVII.

And Willy's wife has written, she never was over-wise.
 Get me my glasses, Annie : thank God that I keep my eyes.
 There is but a trifle left you, when I shall have past away.
 But stay with the old woman now : you cannot have long to stay.

NORTHERN FARMER.

OLD `STYLE.

I.

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän ?
 Noorse ? thourt nowt o' a noorse : whoy, Doctor's abeän an' agoän :
 Says that I moänt 'a naw moor aäle : but I beänt a fool :
 Git ma my aäle, fur I beänt a-gawin' to breäk my rule.

II.

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what's nawways true :
 Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do.
 I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere.
 An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III.

Parson's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
 'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you¹ to 'issén, my friend,' a said,
 An' a tow'd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond ;
 I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

IV.

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
 But a cast oop, thot a did, 'bout Bessy Marris's barne.
 Thaw a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squoire an' choorch an' staäte,
 An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V.

An' I hallus coom'd to 's chooch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
 An' 'eärd 'um a bunmin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock² ower my 'eäd,
 An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,
 An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy.

VI.

Bessy Marris's barne ! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
 Mowt a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
 'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, my lass, tha mun understond ;
 I done moy duty boy 'um as I 'a done boy the lond.

VII.

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says it cäsy an' freeä
 'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend,' says 'eä.
 I weänt saäy men be loiars, thaw summun said it in 'aäste :
 But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.

VIII.

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass ? naw, naw, tha was not born then ;
 Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eärd 'um mysen ;
 Moäst loike a butter-bump,³ fur I 'eärd 'um about an' about,
 But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled 'um out.

IX.

Keäper's it wur ; fo' they fun 'um theer a-laäid of 'is faäce
 Down i' the woild 'enemies⁴ afoor I coom'd to the plaäce.
 Noäks or Thimbleby—toäner⁵ 'ed shot 'um as deäd as a naäil.
 Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my aäle.

¹ ou as in hour.² Cockchafer.³ Bittern.⁴ Anemones.⁵ One or other.

X.

Dubbut looök at the waäste : theer warn't not feeäd for a cow ;
 Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök at it now—
 Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feeäd,
 Fourscoor¹ yows upon it an' some on it down i' seeäd.²

XI.

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
 Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd haäcre o' Squoire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII.

Do godamoighty know what a's doing a-tääkin' o' meä ?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä ;
 An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear !
 And I 'a managed for Squoire coom Michaelmas thutty year.

XIII.

A mowt 'a tääen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a 'ääpoth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a tääen young Robins—a niver mended a fence :
 But godamoighty a moost tääke meä an' tääke ma now
 Wi' aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby hoälms to plow !

XIV.

Look 'ow quoloty smoiles when they seeäs ma a passin' boy,
 Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a beä sewer-loy !'
 Fur they knaws what I beän to Squoire sin fust a coom'd to the 'All ;
 I done moy duty by Squoire an' I done moy duty boy hall.

XV.

Squoire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For whoä's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma quoit ;
 Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rembles the stoäns.

XVI.

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
 Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Devil's oän teäm.
 Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet,
 But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abeär to see it.

XVII.

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the ääle ?
 Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd tääle ;
 I weänt breäk rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy ;
 Git ma my ääle I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.

¹ ou as in hour.² Clover.

NORTHERN FARMER.

NEW STYLE.

I.

DOSN'T thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaäy ?
 Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'em saäy.
 Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's an ass for thy paaïns :
 Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy braaïns.

II.

Woä—theer's a crow to pluck wi' tha, Sam : yon's parson's 'ouse—
 Dosn't thou know that a man mun be eäther a man or a mouse ?
 Time to think on it then ; for thou'll be twenty to weeäk.¹
 Proputty, proputty—woä then woä—let ma 'ear mysén speak.

III.

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee ;
 Thou's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin' it me.
 Thou'll not marry for munny—thou's sweet upo' parson's lass—
 Noä—thou'll marry for luvv—an' we boäth on us thinks tha an ass.

IV.

Seeä'd her todaäy goä by—Saäint's-daäy—they was ringing the bells.
 She's a beauty thou thinks—an' soä is scoors o' gells,
 Them as 'as munny an' all—wot's a beauty ?—the flower as blaws.
 But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty graws.

V.

Do'ant be stunt :² taäke time : I knaws what maäkes tha sa mad.
 Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a lad ?
 But I know'd a Quaäker feller as often 'as tow'd ma this :
 'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is !'

VI.

An' I went wheer munny war : an' thy muther coom to 'and,
 Wi' lots o' munny laaïd by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.
 Maäybe she warn't a beauty :—I niver giv it a thowt—
 But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss as a lass as 'ant nowt ?

VII.

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt 'a nowt when 'e's deäd,
 Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and addle³ her breäde :
 Why ? fur 'e's nobbut a curate, an' weänt niver git hissen clear,
 An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor 'e coom'd to the shere.

¹ This week.² Obstinate.³ Earn.

VIII.

'An thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots o' Varsity debt,
 Stook to his taa'il they did, an' 'e 'ant got shut on 'em yet.
 An' 'e ligs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän to lend 'im a shuvv,
 Woorse nor a far-welter'd¹ yowe : fur, Sammy, 'e married fur luvv.

IX.

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er munny too,
 Maakin' 'em goä together as they've good right to do.
 Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laa'id by?
 Naäy—fur I luvv'd 'er a vast sight moor fur it : reäson why.

X.

Ay an' thy muther says thou wants to marry the lass,
 Cooms of a gentleman burn : an' we boäth on us thinks tha an ass.
 Woä then, proputtu, wiltha?—än ass as near as mays nowt²—
 Woä then, wiltha? dangtha!—the bees is as fell as owt.³

XI.

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd, lad, out o' the fence!
 Gentleman burn! what's gentleman burn? is it shillins an' pence?
 Proputtu, proputtu's ivrything 'ere, an', Sammy, I'm blest
 If it isn't the saäme oop yonder, fur them as 'as it's the best.

XII.

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
 Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.
 Noä, but it's them as niver knows wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.
 Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

XIII.

Them or thir feythurs, tha sees, mun 'a beän a laäzy lot,
 Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny was got.
 Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leästways 'is munny was 'id.
 But 'e tued an' moil'd 'issén deäd, an' 'e died a good un, 'e did.

XIV.

Loook thou theer wheer Wigglesby beck cooms out by the 'ill!
 Feyther run oop to the farm, an' I runs oop to the mill;
 An' I'll run oop to the brig, an' that thou'll live to see;
 And if thou marries a good un I'll leäve the land to thee.

XV.

Thim's my noätions, Sammy, wheerby I means to stick;
 But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leäve the land to Dick.—
 Coom oop, proputtu, proputtu—that's what I 'ears 'im saäy—
 Proputtu, proputtu, proputtu—canter an' canter awaäy.

¹ Or fow-welter'd,—said of a sheep lying on its back.

² Makes nothing.

³ The flies are as fierce as anything.

THE DAISY.

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH.

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine ;
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road ;
How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell
To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue ;
Where, here and there, on sandy
beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
Now watching high on mountain cor-
nice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim ;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipt palm of which they boast ;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green ;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean ;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread ;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours ;
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain ;
Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma ;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles ;
Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the
glory !
A mount of marble, a hundred spires !

I climb'd the roofs at break of day ;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como ; shower and storm and blast
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded ; and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,
The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
 As on The Lariano crept
 To that fair port below the castle
 Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept ;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
 A cypress in the moonlight shake,
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
 One tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
 And up the snowy Splügen drew,
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit
 I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
 And now it tells of Italy.

O love, we two shall go no longer
 To lands of summer across the sea ;

So dear a life your arms enfold
 Whose crying is a cry for gold :
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,
 When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
 This nurseling of another sky
 Still in the little book you lent me,
 And where you tenderly laid it by :

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
 The gloom that saddens Heaven and
 Earth,

The bitter east, the misty summer
 And gray metropolis of the North,

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
 My fancy fled to the South again.

TO THE REV. F. D. MAURICE.

COME, when no graver cares employ,
 Godfather, come and see your boy :
 Your presence will be sun in winter,
 Making the little one leap for joy.

For, being of that honest few,
 Who give the Fiend himself his due,
 Should eighty-thousand college-councils
 Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you ;

Should all our churchmen foam in spite
 At you, so careful of the right,
 Yet one lay-hearth would give you wel-
 come

(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight ;

Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
 I watch the twilight falling brown
 All round a careless-order'd garden
 Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,
 But honest talk and wholesome wine,
 And only hear the magpie gossip
 Garrulous under a roof of pine :

For groves or pine on either hand,
 To break the blast of winter, stand ;
 And further on, the hoary Channel
 Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand ;

Where, if below the milky steep
 Some ship of battle slowly creep,
 And on thro' zones of light and shadow
 Glimmer away to the lonely deep,

We might discuss the Northern sin
 Which made a selfish war begin ;
 Dispute the claims, arrange the chances ;
 Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win :

Or whether war's avenging rod
 Shall lash all Europe into blood ;
 Till you should turn to dearer matters,
 Dear to the man that is dear to God ;

How best to help the slender store,
 How mend the dwellings, of the poor ;
 How gain in life, as life advances,
 Valour and charity more and more.

Come, Maurice, come : the lawn as yet
 Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet ;
 But when the wreath of March has
 blossom'd,
 Crocus, anemone, violet,

Or later, pay one visit here,
 For those are few we hold as dear ;
 Nor pay but one, but come for many,
 Many and many a happy year.

January, 1854.

WILL.

I.

O WELL for him whose will is strong !
 He suffers, but he will not suffer long ;
 He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :
 For him nor moves the loud world's
 random mock,
 Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
 Who seems a promontory of rock,
 That, compass'd round with turbulent
 sound,
 In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
 Tempest-buffed, citadel-crown'd.

II.

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,
 Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended
 Will,
 And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,
 Or seeming-genial venial fault,
 Recurring and suggesting still !
 He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
 Toiling in immeasurable sand,
 And o'er a weary sultry land,
 Far beneath a blazing vault,
 Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
 The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

IN THE VALLEY OF
CAUTERETZ.

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest
 white,
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening
 of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty
 years ago.
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
 The two and thirty years were a mist that
 rolls away ;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice
 of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and
 cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice
 to me.

IN THE GARDEN AT
SWAINSTON.

NIGHTINGALES warbled without,
 Within was weeping for thee :
 Shadows of three dead men
 Walk'd in the walks with me,
 Shadows of three dead men and thou
 wast one of the three.

Nightingales sang in his woods :
 The Master was far away :
 Nightingales warbled and sang
 Of a passion that lasts but a day ;
 Still in the house in his coffin the Prince
 of courtesy lay.

Two dead men have I known
 In courtesy like to thee :
 Two dead men have I loved
 With a love that ever will be :
 Three dead men have I loved and thou
 art last of the three.

THE FLOWER.

ONCE in a golden hour
 I cast to earth a seed.
 Up there came a flower,
 The people said, a weed.

To and fro they went
 Thro' my garden-bower,
 And muttering discontent
 Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall
 It wore a crown of light,
 But thieves from o'er the wall
 Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide
 By every town and tower,
 Till all the people cried,
 'Splendid is the flower.'

Read my little fable :
 He that runs may read.
 Most can raise the flowers now,
 For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,
And some are poor indeed ;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

REQUIESCAT.

FAIR is her cottage in its place,
Where yon broad water sweetly slowly
glides.
It sees itself from thatch to base
Dream in the sliding tides.

And fairer she, but ah how soon to die !
Her quiet dream of life this hour may
cease.
Her peaceful being slowly passes by
To some more perfect peace.

THE SAILOR BOY.

HE rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,
And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
And whistled to the morning star.

And while he whistled long and loud
He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
'O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
I see the place where thou wilt lie.

'The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.'

'Fool,' he answer'd, 'death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

'My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying, "Stay for shame;"
My father raves of death and wreck,
They are all to blame, they are all to
blame.

'God help me ! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me.'

THE ISLET.

'WHITHER, O whither, love, shall we go,
For a score of sweet little summers or so ?'
The sweet little wife of the singer said,
On the day that follow'd the day she was
wed,

'Whither, O whither, love, shall we go ?'
And the singer shaking his curly head
Turn'd as he sat, and struck the keys
There at his right with a sudden crash,
Singing, 'And shall it be over the seas
With a crew that is neither rude nor rash,
But a bevy of Eroses apple-cheek'd,
In a shallop of crystal ivory-beak'd,
With a satin sail of a ruby glow,
To a sweet little Eden on earth that I
know,

A mountain islet pointed and peak'd ;
Waves on a diamond shingle dash,
Cataract brooks to the ocean run,
Fairly-delicate palaces shine
Mixt with myrtle and clad with vine,
And overstream'd and silvery-streak'd
With many a rivulet high against the
Sun

The facets of the glorious mountain flash
Above the valleys of palm and pine.'

'Thither, O thither, love, let us go.'

'No, no, no !
For in all that exquisite isle, my dear,
There is but one bird with a musical
throat,
And his compass is but of a single note,
That it makes one weary to hear.'

'Mock me not ! mock me not ! love, let
us go.'

'No, love, no.
For the bud ever breaks into bloom on
the tree,
And a storm never wakes on the lonely
sea,
And a worm is there in the lonely wood,
That pierces the liver and blackens the
blood ;
And makes it a sorrow to be.'

CHILD-SONGS.

I.

THE CITY CHILD.

DAINTY little maiden, whither would you wander ?

Whither from this pretty home, the home where mother dwells ?

‘Far and far away,’ said the dainty little maiden,

‘All among the gardens, auriculas, anemones,

Roses and lilies and Canterbury-bells.’

Dainty little maiden, whither would you wander ?

Whither from this pretty house, this city-house of ours ?

‘Far and far away,’ said the dainty little maiden,

‘All among the meadows, the clover and the clematis,

Daisies and kingcups and honeysuckle-flowers.’

II.

MINNIE AND WINNIE.

MINNIE and Winnie

Slept in a shell.

Sleep, little ladies !

And they slept well.

Pink was the shell within,

Silver without ;

Sounds of the great sea

Wander’d about.

Sleep, little ladies !

Wake not soon !

Echo on echo

Dies to the moon.

Two bright stars

Peep’d into the shell.

‘What are they dreaming of ?

Who can tell ?’

Started a green linnet

Out of the croft ;

Wake, little ladies,

The sun is aloft !

THE SPITEFUL LETTER.

HERE, it is here, the close of the year,
And with it a spiteful letter.

My name in song has done him much
wrong,

For himself has done much better.

O little bard, is your lot so hard,
If men neglect your pages ?

I think not much of yours or of mine,
I hear the roll of the ages.

Rhymes and rhymes in the range of the
times !

Are mine for the moment stronger ?
Yet hate me not, but abide your lot,
I last but a moment longer.

This faded leaf, our names are as brief ;
What room is left for a hater ?
Yet the yellow leaf hates the greener leaf,
For it hangs one moment later.

Greater than I—is that your cry ?
And men will live to see it.

Well—if it be so—so it is, you know ;
And if it be so, so be it.

Brief, brief is a summer leaf,
But this is the time of hollies.

O hollies and ivies and evergreens,
How I hate the spites and the follies !

LITERARY SQUABBLES.

AH God ! the petty fools of rhyme
That shriek and sweat in pigmy wars
Before the stony face of Time,
And look’d at by the silent stars :

Who hate each other for a song,
And do their little best to bite
And pinch their brethren in the throng,
And scratch the very dead for spite :

And strain to make an inch of room
For their sweet selves, and cannot hear
The sullen Lethe rolling doom
On them and theirs and all things
here :

When one small touch of Charity
 Could lift them nearer God-like state
 Than if the crowded Orb should cry
 Like those who cried Diana great :

And I too, talk, and lose the touch
 I talk of. Surely, after all,
 The noblest answer unto such
 Is perfect stillness when they brawl.

THE VICTIM.

I.

A PLAGUE upon the people fell,
 A famine after laid them low,
 Then thorpe and byre arose in fire,
 For on them brake the sudden foe ;
 So thick they died the people cried,
 'The Gods are moved against the land.'
 The Priest in horror about his altar
 To Thor and Odin lifted a hand :
 ' Help us from famine
 And plague and strife !
 What would you have of us ?
 Human life ?
 Were it our nearest,
 Were it our dearest,
 (Answer, O answer)
 We give you his life.'

II.

But still the foeman spoil'd and burn'd,
 And cattle died, and deer in wood,
 And bird in air, and fishes turn'd
 And whiten'd all the rolling flood ;
 And dead men lay all over the way,
 Or down in a furrow scathed with flame :
 And ever and aye the Priesthood moan'd,
 Till at last it seem'd that an answer
 came.
 ' The King is happy
 In child and wife ;
 Take you his dearest,
 Give us a life.'

III.

The Priest went out by heath and hill ;
 The King was hunting in the wild ;
 They found the mother sitting still ;
 She cast her arms about the child.

The child was only eight summers old,
 His beauty still with his years increased,
 His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,
 He seem'd a victim due to the priest.
 The Priest beheld him,
 And cried with joy,
 ' The Gods have answer'd :
 We give them the boy.'

IV.

The King return'd from out the wild,
 He bore but little game in hand ;
 The mother said, ' They have taken the
 child
 To spill his blood and heal the land :
 The land is sick, the people diseased,
 And blight and famine on all the lea :
 The holy Gods, they must be appeased,
 So I pray you tell the truth to me.
 They have taken our son,
 They will have his life.
 Is *he* your dearest ?
 Or I, the wife ?'

V.

The King bent low, with hand on brow,
 He stay'd his arms upon his knee :
 ' O wife, what use to answer now ?
 For now the Priest has judged for me.'
 The King was shaken with holy fear ;
 ' The Gods,' he said, ' would have
 chosen well ;
 Yet both are near, and both are dear,
 And which the dearest I cannot tell !'
 But the Priest was happy,
 His victim won :
 ' We have his dearest,
 His only son !'

VI.

The rites prepared, the victim bared,
 The knife uprising toward the blow
 To the altar-stone she sprang alone,
 ' Me, not my darling, no !'
 He caught her away with a sudden cry ;
 Suddenly from him brake his wife,
 And shrieking ' I am his dearest, I—
 I am his dearest !' rush'd on the
 knife.

And the Priest was happy,
 'O, Father Odin,
 We give you a life.

Which was his nearest ?
 Who was his dearest ?
 The Gods have answer'd ;
 We give them the wife !'

WAGES.

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she :
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death : if the wages of Virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly ?
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky :
 Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM.

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?

Is not the Vision He ? tho' He be not that which He seems ?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams ?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
 Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him ?

Dark is the world to thee : thyself art the reason why ;
 For is He not all but that which has power to feel ' I am I ' ?

Glory about thee, without thee ; and thou fulfillest thy doom
 Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
 Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise ; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
 For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some : no God at all, says the fool ;
 For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool ;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see ;
 But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He ?

THE VOICE AND THE PEAK.

I.

THE voice and the Peak
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of
dawn !

II.

All night have I heard the voice
Rave over the rocky bar,
But thou wert silent in heaven,
Above thee glided the star.

III.

Hast thou no voice, O Peak,
That standest high above all ?
'I am the voice of the Peak,
I roar and rave for I fall.

IV.

'A thousand voices go
To North, South, East, and West ;
They leave the heights and are troubled,
And moan and sink to their rest.

V.

'The fields are fair beside them,
The chestnut towers in his bloom ;
But they—they feel the desire of the deep—
Fall, and follow their doom.

VI.

'The deep has power on the height,
And the height has power on the deep ;
They are raised for ever and ever,
And sink again into sleep.'

VII.

Not raised for ever and ever,
But when their cycle is o'er,
The valley, the voice, the peak, the star
Pass, and are found no more.

VIII.

The Peak is high and flush'd
At his highest with sunrise fire ;
The Peak is high, and the stars are high,
And the thought of a man is higher.

IX.

A deep below the deep,
And a height beyond the height !
Our hearing is not hearing,
And our seeing is not sight.

X.

The voice and the Peak
Far into heaven withdrawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones
of dawn !

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in
all,
I should know what God and man is.

A DEDICATION.

DEAR, near and true—no truer Time
himself
Can prove you, tho' he make you ever-
more
Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life
Shoots to the fall—take this and pray
that he
Who wrote it, honouring your sweet faith
in him,
May trust himself ; and after praise and
scorn,
As one who feels the immeasurable
world,
Attain the wise indifference of the wise ;
And after Autumn past—if left to pass
His autumn into seeming-leafless days—
Draw toward the long frost and longest
night,
Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the
fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a
flower.¹

¹ The fruit of the Spindle-tree (*Euonymus
Europæus*).

EXPERIMENTS.

BOÄDICEA.

WHILE about the shore of Mona those Neronian legionaries
 Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and Druidess,
 Far in the East Boädiceá, standing loftily charioted,
 Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce volubility,
 Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony Cámulodúne,
 Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild confederacy.

'They that scorn the tribes and call us Britain's barbarous populates,
 Did they hear me, would they listen, did they pity me supplicating?
 Shall I heed them in their anguish? shall I brook to be supplicated?
 Hear Icenian, Catiuechlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 Must their ever-ravening eagle's beak and talon annihilate us?
 Tear the noble heart of Britain, leave it gorily quivering?
 Bark an answer, Britain's raven! bark and blacken innumerable,
 Blacken round the Roman carrion, make the carcase a skeleton,
 Kite and kestrel, wolf and wolfkin, from the wilderness, wallow in it,
 Till the face of Bel be brighten'd, Taranis be propitiated.
 Lo their colony half-defended! lo their colony, Cámulodúne!
 There the horde of Roman robbers mock at a barbarous adversary.
 There the hive of Roman liars worship an emperor-idiot.
 Such is Rome, and this her deity: hear it, Spirit of Cássivëlaún!

'Hear it, Gods! the Gods have heard it, O Icenian, O Coritanian!
 Doubt not ye the Gods have answer'd, Catiuechlanian, Trinobant.
 These have told us all their anger in miraculous utterances,
 Thunder, a flying fire in heaven, a murmur heard aërially,
 Phantom sound of blows descending, moan of an enemy massacred,
 Phantom wail of women and children, multitudinous agonies.
 Bloodily flow'd the Tamesa rolling phantom bodies of horses and men;
 Then a phantom colony smoulder'd on the reflux estuary;
 Lastly yonder yester-even, suddenly giddily tottering—
 There was one who watch'd and told me—down their statue of Victory fell.
 Lo their precious Roman bantling, lo the colony Cámulodúne,
 Shall we teach it a Roman lesson? shall we care to be pitiful?
 Shall we deal with it as an infant? shall we dandle it amorously?

'Hear Icenian, Catiuechlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 While I roved about the forest, long and bitterly meditating,
 There I heard them in the darkness, at the mystical ceremony,
 Loosely robed in flying raiment, sang the terrible prophetesses,
 "Fear not, isle of blowing woodland, isle of silvery parapets!
 Tho' the Roman eagle shadow thee, tho' the gathering enemy narrow thee,
 Thou shalt wax and he shall dwindle, thou shalt be the mighty one yet!
 Thine the liberty, thine the glory, thine the deeds to be celebrated,

Thine the myriad-rolling ocean, light and shadow illimitable,
 Thine the lands of lasting summer, many-blossoming Paradises,
 Thine the North and thine the South and thine the battle-thunder of God,"
 So they chanted : how shall Britain light upon auguries happier ?
 So they chanted in the darkness, and there cometh a victory now.

'Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant !
 Me the wife of rich Prasútagus, me the lover of liberty,
 Me they seized and me they tortured, me they lash'd and humiliated,
 Me the sport of ribald Veterans, mine of ruffian violators !
 See they sit, they hide their faces, miserable in ignominy !
 Wherefore in me burns an anger, not by blood to be satiated.
 Lo the palaces and the temple, lo the colony Cámulodúne !
 There they ruled, and thence they wasted all the flourishing territory,
 Thither at their will they haled the yellow-ringleted Britoness—
 Bloodily, bloodily fall the battle-axe, unexhausted, inexorable.
 Shout Icenian, Catieuchlanian, shout Coritanian, Trinobant,
 Till the victim hear within and yearn to hurry precipitously
 Like the leaf in a roaring whirlwind, like the smoke in a hurricane whirl'd.
 Lo the colony, there they rioted in the city of Cúnobelíne !
 There they drank in cups of emerald, there at tables of ebony lay,
 Rolling on their purple couches in their tender effeminacy.
 There they dwelt and there they rioted ; there—there—they dwell no more.
 Burst the gates, and burn the palaces, break the works of the statuary,
 Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abominable,
 Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and voluptuousness,
 Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and humiliated,
 Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the brains of the little one out,
 Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, trample them under us.'

So the Queen Boädicéa, standing loftily charioted,
 Brandishing in her hand a dart and rolling glances lioness-like,
 Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters in her fierce volubility.
 Till her people all around the royal chariot agitated,
 Madly dash'd the darts together, writhing barbarous lineäments,
 Made the noise of frosty woodlands, when they shiver in January,
 Roar'd as when the roaring breakers boom and blanch on the precipices,
 Yell'd as when the winds of winter tear an oak on a promontory.
 So the silent colony hearing her tumultuous adversaries
 Clash the darts and on the buckler beat with rapid unanimous hand,
 Thought on all her evil tyrannies, all her pitiless avarice,
 Till she felt the heart within her fall and flutter tremulously,
 Then her pulses at the clamouring of her enemy fainted away.
 Out of evil evil flourishes, out of tyranny tyranny buds.
 Ran the land with Roman slaughter, multitudinous agonies.
 Perish'd many a maid and matron, many a valorous legionary,
 Fell the colony, city, and citadel, London, Verulam, Cámulodúne.

IN QUANTITY.

ON TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER.

Hexameters and Pentameters.

THESE lame hexameters the strong-wing'd music of Homer !

No—but a most burlesque barbarous experiment.

When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye Muses, in England ?

When did a frog coarser croak upon our Helicon ?

Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,

Barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters.

MILTON.

Alcaics.

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,

O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,

God-gifted organ-voice of England,

Milton, a name to resound for ages ;

Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,

Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,

Tower, as the deep-domed empyræan

Rings to the roar of an angel onset—

Me rather all that bowery loneliness,

The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,

And bloom profuse and cedar arches

Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,

Where some refulgent sunset of India

Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,

And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods

Whisper in odorous heights of even.

Hendecasyllabics.

O YOU chorus of indolent reviewers,

Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,

Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem

All composed in a metre of Catullus,

All in quantity, careful of my motion,

Like the skater on ice that hardly bears

him,

Lest I fall unawares before the people,

Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.

Should I flounder awhile without a tumble

Thro' this metrification of Catullus,

They should speak to me not without a welcome,

All that chorus of indolent reviewers.

Hard, hard, hard is it, only not to tumble,

So fantastical is the dainty metre.

Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me

Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.

O blatant Magazines, regard me rather—

Since I blush to belaud myself a moment—

As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost

Horticultural art, or half coquette-like

Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

SPECIMEN OF A TRANSLATION OF THE ILIAD IN BLANK VERSE.

So Hector spake ; the Trojans roar'd
applause ;

Then loosed their sweating horses from
the yoke,

And each beside his chariot bound his
own ;

And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
In haste they drove, and honey-hearted

wine

And bread from out the houses brought,
and heap'd

Their firewood, and the winds from off
the plain

Roll'd the rich vapour far into the heaven.

And these all night upon the bridge¹ of
war

Sat glorying ; many a fire before them
blazed :

¹ Or, ridge.

As when in heaven the stars about the
moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are
laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting
peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the
stars
Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his
heart :

So many a fire between the ships and
stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of
Troy,
A thousand on the plain ; and close by
each
Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;
And eating hoary grain and pulse the
steeds,
Fixt by their cars, waited the golden
dawn. *Iliad* VIII. 542-561.

THE WINDOW ;

OR, THE SONG OF THE WRENS.

FOUR years ago Mr. Sullivan requested me to write a little song-cycle, German fashion, for him to exercise his art upon. He had been very successful in setting such old songs as 'Orpheus with his lute,' and I dressed up for him, partly in the old style, a puppet, whose almost only merit is, perhaps, that it can dance to Mr. Sullivan's instrument. I am sorry that my four-year-old puppet should have to dance at all in the dark shadow of these days ; but the music is now completed, and I am bound by my promise.

December, 1870.

A. TENNYSON.

THE WINDOW.

ON THE HILL.

THE lights and shadows fly !
Yonder it brightens and darkens down
on the plain.

A jewel, a jewel dear to a lover's eye !
Oh is it the brook, or a pool, or her
window pane,
When the winds are up in the
morning ?

Clouds that are racing above,
And winds and lights and shadows that
cannot be still,
All running on one way to the home
of my love,
You are all running on, and I stand on
the slope of the hill,
And the winds are up in the morning !

Follow, follow the chase !
And my thoughts are as quick and as
quick, ever on, on, on.
O lights, are you flying over her sweet
little face ?

And my heart is there before you are
come, and gone,
When the winds are up in the
morning !

Follow them down the slope !
And I follow them down to the window-
pane of my dear,
And it brightens and darkens and
brightens like my hope,
And it darkens and brightens and darkens
like my fear,
And the winds are up in the
morning.

AT THE WINDOW.

Vine, vine and eglantine,
Clasp her window, trail and twine !
Rose, rose and clematis,
Trail and twine and clasp and kiss,
Kiss, kiss ; and make her a bower
All of flowers, and drop me a flower,
Drop me a flower.

Vine, vine and eglantine,
 Cannot a flower, a flower, be mine?
 Rose, rose and clematis,
 Drop me a flower, a flower, to kiss,
 Kiss, kiss—and out of her bower
 All of flowers, a flower, a flower,
 Dropt, a flower.

GONE.

Gone !
 Gone, till the end of the year,
 Gone, and the light gone with her, and
 left me in shadow here !
 Gone—flitted away,
 Taken the stars from the night and the
 sun from the day !
 Gone, and a cloud in my heart, and a
 storm in the air !
 Flown to the east or the west, flitted I
 know not where !
 Down in the south is a flash and a groan :
 she is there ! she is there !

WINTER.

The frost is here,
 And fuel is dear,
 And woods are sear,
 And fires burn clear,
 And frost is here
 And has bitten the heel of the going year.

Bite, frost, bite !
 You roll up away from the light
 The blue wood-louse, and the plump
 dormouse,
 And the bees are still'd, and the flies are
 kill'd,
 And you bite far into the heart of the
 house,
 But not into mine.

Bite, frost, bite !
 The woods are all the searer,
 The fuel is all the dearer,
 The fires are all the clearer,
 My spring is all the nearer,
 You have bitten into the heart of the
 earth,
 But not into mine.

SPRING.

Birds' love and birds' song
 Flying here and there,
 Birds' song and birds' love,
 And you with gold for hair !
 Birds' song and birds' love,
 Passing with the weather,
 Men's song and men's love,
 To love once and for ever.

Men's love and birds' love,
 And women's love and men's !
 And you my wren with a crown of gold,
 You my queen of the wrens !
 You the queen of the wrens—
 We'll be birds of a feather,
 I'll be King of the Queen of the wrens,
 And all in a nest together.

THE LETTER.

Where is another sweet as my sweet,
 Fine of the fine, and shy of the shy ?
 Fine little hands, fine little feet—
 Dewy blue eye.
 Shall I write to her ? shall I go ?
 Ask her to marry me by and by ?
 Somebody said that she'd say no ;
 Somebody knows that she'll say ay !

Ay or no, if ask'd to her face ?
 Ay or no, from shy of the shy ?
 Go, little letter, apace, apace,
 Fly ;
 Fly to the light in the valley below—
 Tell my wish to her dewy blue eye :
 Somebody said that she'd say no ;
 Somebody knows that she'll say ay !

NO ANSWER.

The mist and the rain, the mist and the
 rain !
 Is it ay or no ? is it ay or no ?
 And never a glimpse of her window pane !
 And I may die but the grass will grow,
 And the grass will grow when I am gone,
 And the wet west wind and the world
 will go on.
 Ay is the song of the wedded spheres,
 No is trouble and cloud and storm,

Ay is life for a hundred years,
 No will push me down to the worm,
 And when I am there and dead and gone,
 The wet west wind and the world will
 go on.

The wind and the wet, the wind and the
 wet !

Wet west wind how you blow, you
 blow !

And never a line from my lady yet !

Is it ay or no ? is it ay or no ?

Blow then, blow, and when I am gone,
 The wet west wind and the world may
 go on.

NO ANSWER.

Winds are loud and you are dumb,
 Take my love, for love will come,
 Love will come but once a life.
 Winds are loud and winds will pass !
 Spring is here with leaf and grass :
 Take my love and be my wife.
 After-loves of maids and men
 Are but dainties drest again :
 Love me now, you'll love me then :
 Love can love but once a life.

THE ANSWER.

Two little hands that meet,
 Claspt on her seal, my sweet !
 Must I take you and break you,
 Two little hands that meet ?
 I must take you, and break you,
 And loving hands must part—
 Take, take—break, break—
 Break—you may break my heart.
 Faint heart never won—
 Break, break, and all's done.

AY.

Be merry, all birds, to-day,
 Be merry on earth as you never were
 merry before,
 Be merry in heaven, O larks, and far away,
 And merry for ever and ever, and one
 day more.

Why ?

For it's easy to find a rhyme.

Look, look, how he flits,
 The fire-crown'd king of the wrens,
 from out of the pine !
 Look how they tumble the blossom, the
 mad little tits !

'Cuck-oo! Cuck-oo!' was ever a May
 so fine ?

Why ?

For it's easy to find a rhyme.

O merry the linnet and dove,
 And swallow and sparrow and throstle,
 and have your desire !

O merry my heart, you have gotten the
 wings of love,
 And flit like the king of the wrens with
 a crown of fire.

Why ?

For it's ay ay, ay ay.

WHEN.

Sun comes, moon comes,
 Time slips away.
 Sun sets, moon sets,
 Love, fix a day.

'A year hence, a year hence.'

'We shall both be gray.'

'A month hence, a month hence.

'Far, far away.'

'A week hence, a week hence.'

'Ah, the long delay.'

'Wait a little, wait a little,
 You shall fix a day.'

'To-morrow, love, to-morrow,
 And that's an age away.'
 Blaze upon her window, sun,
 And honour all the day.

MARRIAGE MORNING.

Light, so low upon earth,
 You send a flash to the sun.
 Here is the golden close of love,
 All my wooing is done.
 Oh, the woods and the meadows,
 Woods where we hid from the wet,
 Stiles where we stay'd to be kind,
 Meadows in which we met !

Light, so low in the vale
 You flash and lighten afar,
 For this is the golden morning of love,
 And you are his morning star.
 Flash, I am coming, I come,
 By meadow and stile and wood,
 Oh, lighten into my eyes and my heart,
 Into my heart and my blood !

Heart, are you great enough
 For a love that never tires ?
 O heart, are you great enough for love ?
 I have heard of thorns and briers.
 Over the thorns and briers,
 Over the meadows and stiles,
 Over the world to the end of it
 Flash for a million miles.

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII.

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy
 face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove ;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;
 Thou madest Life in man and brute ;
 Thou madest Death ; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
 Thou madest man, he knows not
 why,
 He thinks he was not made to die ;
 And thou hast made him : thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood, thou :
 Our wills are ours, we know not
 how ;
 Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day ;
 They have their day and cease to be :
 They are but broken lights of thee,
 And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
 For knowledge is of things we see ;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell ;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;
 We mock thee when we do not fear :
 But help thy foolish ones to bear ;
 Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me ;
 What seem'd my worth since I
 began ;
 For merit lives from man to man,
 And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
 Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
 I trust he lives in thee, and there
 I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth ;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth,
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849.

I.

I HELD it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
 And find in loss a gain to match ?
 Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
 The far-off interest of tears ?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
 Let darkness keep her raven gloss :
 Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
 To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of love, and boast,
 'Behold the man that loved and lost,
 But all he was is overworn.'

II.

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock ;
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
 Who changest not in any gale,
 Nor branding summer suns avail
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom :

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood
 And grow incorporate into thee.

III.

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,
 What whispers from thy lying lip ?

'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run ;
 A web is wov'n across the sky ;
 From out waste places comes a cry,
 And murmurs from the dying sun :

'And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
 With all the music in her tone,
 A hollow echo of my own,—
 A hollow form with empty hands.'

And shall I take a thing so blind,
 Embrace her as my natural good ;
 Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
 Upon the threshold of the mind ?

IV.

To Sleep I give my powers away ;
 My will is bondsman to the dark ;
 I sit within a helmless bark,
 And with my heart I muse and say :

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
 That thou should'st fail from thy
 desire,
 Who scarcely darest to inquire,
 'What is it makes me beat so low ?'

Something it is which thou hast lost,
 Some pleasure from thine early years.
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling
 tears,

That grief hath shaken into frost !

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
 All night below the darken'd eyes ;
 With morning wakes the will, and
 cries,
 'Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.'

V.

I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel ;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies ;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the
 cold :
 But that large grief which these
 enfold
 Is given in outline and no more.

VI.

One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
 That 'Loss is common to the race'—
 And common is the commonplace,
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
 My own less bitter, rather more :
 Too common ! Never morning wore
 To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
 Who pledgest now thy gallant son ;
 A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
 Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
 Thy sailor, — while thy head is
 bow'd,
 His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
 Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
 At that last hour to please him well ;
 Who mused on all I had to tell,
 And something written, something
 thought ;

Expecting still his advent home ;
 And ever met him on his way
 With wishes, thinking, ' here to-day,'
 Or ' here to-morrow will he come.'

O somewhere, meek, unconscious dove,
 That sittest ranging golden hair ;
 And glad to find thyself so fair,
 Poor child, that waitest for thy love !

For now her father's chimney glows
 In expectation of a guest ;
 And thinking ' this will please him
 best,'

She takes a riband or a rose ;

For he will see them on to-night ;
 And with the thought her colour
 burns ;
 And, having left the glass, she turns
 Once more to set a ringlet right ;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse
 Had fallen, and her future Lord
 Was drown'd in passing thro' the
 ford,
 Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end ?
 And what to me remains of good ?
 To her, perpetual maidenhood,
 And unto me no second friend.

VII.

Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to
 beat
 So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing I creep
 At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here ; but far away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.

VIII.

A happy lover who has come
 To look on her that loves him well,
 Who 'lights and rings the gateway
 bell,
 And learns her gone and far from home ;

He saddens, all the magic light
 Dies off at once from bower and hall,
 And all the place is dark, and all
 The chambers emptied of delight :

So find I every pleasant spot
 In which we two were wont to meet,
 The field, the chamber and the street,
 For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
 In those deserted walks, may find
 A flower beat with rain and wind,
 Which once she foster'd up with care ;

So seems it in my deep regret,
 O my forsaken heart, with thee
 And this poor flower of poesy
 Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,
 I go to plant it on his tomb,
 That if it can it there may bloom,
 Or dying, there at least may die.

IX.

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
 Saillest the placid ocean-plains
 With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
 Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
 In vain ; a favourable speed
 Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
 Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
 Thysliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
 As our pure love, thro' early light
 Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above ;
 Sleep, gentle heavens, before the
 prow ;

Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
 My friend, the brother of my love ;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
 Till all my widow'd race be run ;
 Dear as the mother to the son,
 More than my brothers are to me.

X.

I hear the noise about thy keel ;
 I hear the bell struck in the night :
 I see the cabin-window bright ;
 I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
 And travell'd men from foreign lands ;
 And letters unto trembling hands ;
 And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him : we have idle dreams :
 This look of quiet flatters thus
 Our home-bred fancies : O to us,
 The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
 That takes the sunshine and the rains,
 Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
 The chalice of the grapes of God ;

Than if with thee the roaring wells
 Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine ;
 And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
 Should toss with tangle and with shells.

XI.

Calm is the morn without a sound,
 Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
 And only thro' the faded leaf
 The chestnut pattering to the ground :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
 And on these dews that drench the
 furze,
 And all the silvery gossamers
 That twinkle into green and gold :

Calm and still light on yon great plain
 That sweeps with all its autumn
 bowers,
 And crowded farms and lessening
 towers,

To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
 These leaves that redden to the fall ;
 And in my heart, if calm at all,
 If any calm, a calm despair :

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
 And waves that sway themselves in
 rest,
 And dead calm in that noble breast
 Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XII.

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
 To bear thro' Heaven a tale of woe,
 Some dolorous message knit below
 The wild pulsation of her wings ;

Like her I go ; I cannot stay ;
 I leave this mortal ark behind,
 A weight of nerves without a mind,
 And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
 And reach the glow of southern skies,
 And see the sails at distance rise,
 And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying ; ' Comes he thus, my friend ?
 Is this the end of all my care ?'
 And circle moaning in the air :
 ' Is this the end ? Is this the end ?'

And forward dart again, and play
 About the prow, and back return
 To where the body sits, and learn
 That I have been an hour away.

XIII.

Tears of the widower, when he sees
 A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
 And moves his doubtful arms, and
 feels
 Her place is empty, fall like these ;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
 A void where heart on heart reposed ;
 And, where warm hands have prest
 and closed,
 Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
 An awful thought, a life removed,
 The human-hearted man I loved,
 A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
 I do not suffer in a dream ;
 For now so strange do these things
 seem,
 Mine eyes have leisure for their tears ;

My fancies time to rise on wing,
 And glance about the approaching
 sails,
 As tho' they brought but merchants'
 bales,
 And not the burthen that they bring.

XIV.

If one should bring me this report,
 That thou hadst touch'd the land
 to-day,
 And I went down unto the quay,
 And found thee lying in the port ;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
 Should see thy passengers in rank
 Come stepping lightly down the
 plank,
 And beckoning unto those they know ;

And if along with these should come
 The man I held as half-divine ;
 Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
 And ask a thousand things of home ;

And I should tell him all my pain,
 And how my life had droop'd of late,
 And he should sorrow o'er my state
 And marvel what possess'd my brain ;

And I perceived no touch of change,
 No hint of death in all his frame,
 But found him all in all the same,
 I should not feel it to be strange.

XV.

To-night the winds begin to rise
 And roar from yonder dropping day :
 The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
 The rooks are blown about the skies ;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
 The cattle huddled on the lea ;
 And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
 The sunbeam strikes along the world :

And but for fancies, which aver
 That all thy motions gently pass
 Athwart a plane of molten glass,
 I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud ;
 And but for fear it is not so,
 The wild unrest that lives in woe
 Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
 And onward drags a labouring breast,
 And topples round the dreary west,
 A looming bastion fringed with fire.

XVI.

What words are these have fall'n from me ?
 Can calm despair and wild unrest
 Be tenants of a single breast,
 Or sorrow such a changeling be ?

Or doth she only seem to take
 The touch of change in calm or storm ;
 But knows no more of transient form
 In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
 Hung in the shadow of a heaven ?
 Or has the shock, so harshly given,
 Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
 And staggers blindly ere she sink ?
 And stunn'd me from my power to
 think
 And all my knowledge of myself ;

And made me that delirious man
 Whose fancy fuses old and new,
 And flashes into false and true,
 And mingles all without a plan ?

XVII.

Thou comest, much wept for : such a breeze
 Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer
 Was as the whisper of an air
 To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
 Thro' circles of the bounding sky,
 Week after week : the days go by :
 Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou may'st roam,
 My blessing, like a line of light,
 Is on the waters day and night,
 And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
 Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark ;
 And balmy drops in summer dark
 Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,
 Such precious relics brought by thee ;
 The dust of him I shall not see
 Till all my widow'd race be run.

XVIII.

'Tis well ; 'tis something ; we may stand
 Where he in English earth is laid,
 And from his ashes may be made
 The violet of his native land.

'Tis little ; but it looks in truth
 As if the quiet bones were blest
 Among familiar names to rest
 And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
 That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
 And come, whatever loves to weep,
 And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
 I, falling on his faithful heart,
 Would breathing thro' his lips impart
 The life that almost dies in me ;

That dies not, but endures with pain,
 And slowly forms the firmer mind,
 Treasuring the look it cannot find,
 The words that are not heard again.

XIX.

The Danube to the Severn gave
 The darken'd heart that beat no
 more ;

They laid him by the pleasant shore,
 And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills ;
 The salt sea-water passes by,
 And hushes half the babbling Wye,
 And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
 And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
 When fill'd with tears that cannot
 fall,

I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
 Is vocal in its wooded walls ;
 My deeper anguish also falls,
 And I can speak a little then.

XX.

The lesser griefs that may be said,
 That breathe a thousand tender
 vows,

Are but as servants in a house
 Where lies the master newly dead ;

Who speak their feeling as it is,
 And weep the fulness from the
 mind :

'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find
 Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,
 That out of words a comfort win ;
 But there are other griefs within,
 And tears that at their fountain freeze ;

For by the hearth the children sit
 Cold in that atmosphere of Death,
 And scarce endure to draw the
 breath,
 Or like to noiseless phantoms flit :

But open converse is there none,
 So much the vital spirits sink
 To see the vacant chair, and think,
 'How good ! how kind ! and he is gone.'

XXI.

I sing to him that rests below,
 And, since the grasses round me wave,
 I take the grasses of the grave,
 And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
 And sometimes harshly will he speak:
 'This fellow would make weakness
 weak,
 And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,
 He loves to make parade of pain,
 That with his piping he may gain
 The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
 For private sorrow's barren song,
 When more and more the people
 throng
 The chairs and thrones of civil power?

'A time to sicken and to swoon,
 When Science reaches forth her arms
 To feel from world to world, and
 charms
 Her secret from the latest moon?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
 Ye never knew the sacred dust:
 I do but sing because I must,
 And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
 For now her little ones have ranged;
 And one is sad; her note is changed,
 Because her brood is stol'n away.

XXII.

The path by which we twain did go,
 Which led by tracts that pleased us
 well,
 Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
 From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheer'd the way,
 And, crown'd with all the season
 lent,
 From April on to April went,
 And glad at heart from May to May:

But where the path we walk'd began
 To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
 As we descended following Hope,
 There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
 And spread his mantle dark and
 cold,
 And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
 And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
 Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
 And think, that somewhere in the
 waste
 The Shadow sits and waits for me.

XXIII.

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
 Or breaking into song by fits,
 Alone, alone, to where he sits,
 The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
 I wander, often falling lame,
 And looking back to whence I came,
 Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it
 ran
 Thro' lands where not a leaf was
 dumb;
 But all the lavish hills would hum
 The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,
 And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
 And Thought leapt out to wed with
 Thought
 Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
 And all was good that Time could
 bring,
 And all the secret of the Spring
 Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
 On Argive heights divinely sang,
 And round us all the thicket rang
 To many a flute of Arcady.

XXIV.

And was the day of my delight
 As pure and perfect as I say?
 The very source and fount of Day
 Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,
 This earth had been the Paradise
 It never look'd to human eyes
 Since our first Sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
 Makes former gladness loom so
 great?
 The lowness of the present state,
 That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
 A glory from its being far;
 And orb into the perfect star
 We saw not, when we moved therein?

XXV.

I know that this was Life,—the track
 Whereon with equal feet we fared;
 And then, as now, the day prepared
 The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
 As light as carrier-birds in air;
 I loved the weight I had to bear,
 Because it needed help of Love:

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
 When mighty Love would cleave in
 twain
 The lading of a single pain,
 And part it, giving half to him.

XXVI.

Still onward winds the dreary way;
 I with it; for I long to prove
 No lapse of moons can canker Love,
 Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
 And goodness, and hath power to
 see
 Within the green the moulder'd tree,
 And towers fall'n as soon as built—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
 Or see (in Him is no before)
 In more of life true life no more
 And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
 Breaks hither over Indian seas,
 That Shadow waiting with the
 keys,
 To shroud me from my proper scorn.

XXVII.

I envy not in any moods
 The captive void of noble rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
 His license in the field of time,
 Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
 To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
 The heart that never plighted troth
 But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
 Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
 I feel it, when I sorrow most;
 'Tis better to have loved and lost
 Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII.

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
 The moon is hid; the night is still;
 The Christmas bells from hill to hill
 Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
 From far and near, on mead and
 moor,
 Swell out and fail, as if a door
 Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
 That now dilate, and now decrease,
 Peace and goodwill, goodwill and
 peace,
 Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
 I almost wish'd no more to wake,
 And that my hold on life would break
 Before I heard those bells again :

But they my troubled spirit rule,
 For they controll'd me when a boy ;
 They bring me sorrow touch'd with
 joy,
 The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXIX.

With such compelling cause to grieve
 As daily vexes household peace,
 And chains regret to his decease,
 How dare we keep our Christmas-eve ;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
 To enrich the threshold of the night
 With shower'd largess of delight
 In dance and song and game and jest ?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
 Entwine the cold baptismal font,
 Make one wreath more for Use and
 Wont,
 That guard the portals of the house ;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
 Gray nurses, loving nothing new ;
 Why should they miss their yearly
 due
 Before their time ? They too will die.

XXX.

With trembling fingers did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas
 hearth ;
 A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
 And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
 We gambol'd, making vain pretence
 Of gladness, with an awful sense
 Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused : the winds were in the beech :
 We heard them sweep the winter
 land ;
 And in a circle hand-in-hand
 Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang ;
 We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
 A merry song we sang with him
 Last year : impetuously we sang :

We ceased : a gentler feeling crept
 Upon us : surely rest is meet :
 ' They rest,' we said, ' their sleep is
 sweet,'
 And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range ;
 Once more we sang : ' They do not
 die
 Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
 Nor change to us, although they change ;

' Rapt from the fickle and the frail
 With gather'd power, yet the same,
 Pierces the keen seraphic flame
 From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
 Draw forth the cheerful day from
 night :
 O Father, touch the east, and light
 The light that shone when Hope was
 born.

XXXI.

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
 And home to Mary's house return'd,
 Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
 To hear her weeping by his grave ?

' Where wert thou, brother, those four
 days ?'
 There lives no record of reply,
 Which telling what it is to die
 Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
 The streets were fill'd with joyful
 sound,
 A solemn gladness even crown'd
 The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ !
 The rest remaineth unreveal'd ;
 He told it not ; or something seal'd
 The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's
feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful
prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure ;
What souls possess themselves so
pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs ?

XXXIII.

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer
air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,
Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views ;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good :
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine !

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

XXXIV.

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is ;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty ; such as lurks
In some wild Poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I ?
'Twere hardly worth my while to
choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die ;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent
draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

XXXV.

Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow
house,
'The cheeks drop in ; the body bows
Man dies : nor is there hope in dust :'

Might I not say ? 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive :'
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or
slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be ;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
'The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and
more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case ? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd
the grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

XXXVI.

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
 Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
 We yield all blessing to the name
 Of Him that made them current coin ;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
 Where truth in closest words shall
 fail,
 When truth embodied in a tale
 Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and
 wrought
 With human hands the creed of
 creeds

In loveliness of perfect deeds,
 More strong than all poetic thought ;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
 And those wild eyes that watch the
 wave

In roarings round the coral reef.

XXXVII.

Urania speaks with darken'd brow :
 'Thou pratest here where thou art
 least ;

This faith has many a purer priest,
 And many an abler voice than thou.

'Go down beside thy native rill,
 On thy Parnassus set thy feet,
 And hear thy laurel whisper sweet
 About the ledges of the hill.'

And my Melpomene replies,
 A touch of shame upon her cheek :
 'I am not worthy ev'n to speak
 Of thy prevailing mysteries ;

'For I am but an earthly Muse,
 And owning but a little art
 To lull with song an aching heart,
 And render human love his dues ;

'But brooding on the dear one dead,
 And all he said of things divine,
 (And dear to me as sacred wine
 To dying lips is all he said),

T

'I murmur'd, as I came along,
 Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd;
 And loiter'd in the master's field,
 And darken'd sanctities with song.'

XXXVIII.

With weary steps I loiter on,
 Tho' always under alter'd skies
 The purple from the distance dies,
 My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,
 The herald melodies of spring,
 But in the songs I love to sing
 A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here
 Survive in spirits render'd free,
 Then are these songs I sing of thee
 Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

XXXIX.

Old warder of these buried bones,
 And answering now my random
 stroke
 With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
 Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
 To thee too comes the golden hour
 When flower is feeling after flower ;
 But Sorrow—fixt upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men,—
 What whisper'd from her lying lips?
 Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
 And passes into gloom again.

XL.

Could we forget the widow'd hour
 And look on Spirits breathed away,
 As on a maiden in the day
 When first she wears her orange-flower !

When crown'd with blessing she doth
 rise
 To take her latest leave of home,
 And hopes and light regrets that
 come
 Make April of her tender eyes ;

S

And doubtful joys the father move,
 And tears are on the mother's face,
 As parting with a long embrace
 She enters other realms of love ;

Her office there to rear, to teach,
 Becoming as is meet and fit
 A link among the days, to knit
 The generations each with each ;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
 A life that bears immortal fruit
 In those great offices that suit
 The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern !
 How often shall her old fireside
 Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,
 How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,
 And bring her babe, and make her
 boast,
 Till even those that miss'd her most
 Shall count new things as dear as old :

But thou and I have shaken hands,
 Till growing winters lay me low ;
 My paths are in the fields I know,
 And thine in undiscover'd lands.

XLI.

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
 Did ever rise from high to higher ;
 As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
 As flies the lighter thro' the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,
 And I have lost the links that bound
 Thy changes ; here upon the ground,
 No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly ! yet that this could be—
 That I could wing my will with
 might
 To leap the grades of life and light,
 And flash at once, my friend, to thee.

For tho' my nature rarely yields
 To that vague fear implied in death ;
 Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,
 The howlings from forgotten fields ;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
 An inner trouble I behold,
 A spectral doubt which makes me
 cold,

That I shall be thy mate no more,

Tho' following with an upward mind
 The wonders that have come to
 thee,

Thro' all the secular to-be,
 But evermore a life behind.

XLII.

I vex my heart with fancies dim :
 He still outstript me in the race ;
 It was but unity of place
 That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,
 And he the much-beloved again,
 A lord of large experience, train
 To ripper growth the mind and will :

And what delights can equal those
 That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
 When one that loves but knows not,
 reaps
 A truth from one that loves and knows ?

XLIII.

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
 And every spirit's folded bloom
 Thro' all its intervital gloom
 In some long trance should slumber on ;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
 Bare of the body, might it last,
 And silent traces of the past
 Be all the colour of the flower :

So then were nothing lost to man ;
 So that still garden of the souls
 In many a figured leaf enrolls
 The total world since life began ;

And love will last as pure and whole
 As when he loved me here in
 Time,
 And at the spiritual prime
 Rewaken with the dawning soul.

XLIV.

How fares it with the happy dead ?
 For here the man is more and more ;
 But he forgets the days before
 God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,
 And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
 Gives out at times (he knows not
 whence)

A little flash, a mystic hint ;

And in the long harmonious years
 (If Death so taste Lethæan springs),
 May some dim touch of earthly
 things

Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
 O turn thee round, resolve the doubt ;
 My guardian angel will speak out
 In that high place, and tell thee all.

XLV.

The baby new to earth and sky,
 What time his tender palm is prest
 Against the circle of the breast,
 Has never thought that 'this is I :'

But as he grows he gathers much,
 And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
 And finds 'I am not what I see,
 And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
 From whence clear memory may
 begin,

As thro' the frame that binds him in
 His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
 Which else were fruitless of their due,
 Had man to learn himself anew
 Beyond the second birth of Death.

XLVI.

We ranging down this lower track,
 The path we came by, thorn and
 flower,
 Is shadow'd by the growing hour,
 Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it : there no shade can last
 In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
 But clear from marge to marge shall
 bloom

The eternal landscape of the past ;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd ;
 The fruitful hours of still increase ;
 Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
 And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
 A bounded field, nor stretching far ;
 Look also, Love, a brooding star,
 A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVII.

That each, who seems a separate whole,
 Should move his rounds, and fusing
 all
 The skirts of self again, should fall
 Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet :
 Eternal form shall still divide
 The eternal soul from all beside ;
 And I shall know him when we meet :

And we shall sit at endless feast,
 Enjoying each the other's good :
 What vaster dream can hit the mood
 Of Love on earth ? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
 Before the spirits fade away,
 Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
 'Farewell ! We lose ourselves in light.'

XLVIII.

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
 Were taken to be such as closed
 Grave doubts and answers here pro-
 posed,
 Then these were such as men might scorn :

Her care is not to part and prove ;
 She takes, when harsher moods
 remit,
 What slender shade of doubt may
 flit,
 And makes it vassal unto love :

And hence, indeed, she sports with
words,
But better serves a wholesome law,
And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords :

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Shortswallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

XLIX.

From art, from nature, from the schools,
Let random influences glance,
Like light in many a shiver'd lance
That breaks about the dappled pools :

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,
The slightest air of song shall breathe
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
But blame not thou the winds that
make
The seeming-wanton ripple break,
The tender-pencil'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears.

L.

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the
nerves prick
And tingle ; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer
trust ;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and
sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

LI.

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side ?
Is there no baseness we would hide ?
No inner vileness that we dread ?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden
shame
And I be lessen'd in his love ?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue :
Shall love be blamed for want of
faith ?
There must be wisdom with great
Death :
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall :
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

LII.

I cannot love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the thing beloved ;
My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

' Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,'
The Spirit of true love replied ;
' Thou canst not move me from thy
side,

Nor human frailty do me wrong.

' What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears ?
What record ? not the sinless years
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue :

' So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
Abide : thy wealth is gather'd in,
When Time hath sunder'd shell from
pearl.'

LIII.

How many a father have I seen,
 A sober man, among his boys,
 'Whose youth was full of foolish
 noise,
 Who wears his manhood hale and green :

And dare we to this fancy give,
 That had the wild oat not been
 sown,
 The soil, left barren, scarce had
 grown
 The grain by which a man may live ?

Or, if we held the doctrine sound
 For life outliving heats of youth,
 Yet who would preach it as a truth
 To those that eddy round and round ?

Hold thou the good : define it well :
 For fear divine Philosophy
 Should push beyond her mark, and
 be
 Procress to the Lords of Hell.

LIV.

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
 That not one life shall be destroy'd,
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete ;

That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
 That not a moth with vain desire
 Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
 Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything ;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last—far off—at last, to all,
 And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream : but what am I ?
 An infant crying in the night :
 An infant crying for the light :
 And with no language but a cry.

LV.

The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul ?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams ?
 So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life ;

That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meaning in her deeds,
 And finding that of fifty seeds
 She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs
 That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI.

'So careful of the type ?' but no.
 From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
 She cries, 'A thousand types are gone :
 I care for nothing, all shall go.

'Thou makest thine appeal to me :
 I bring to life, I bring to death :
 The spirit does but mean the breath :
 I know no more.' And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation's final law—
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
 Who battled for the True, the Just,
 Be blown about the desert dust,
 Or seal'd within the iron hills ?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVII.

Peace; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song:
Peace; come away: we do him
wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
But half my life I leave behind:
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But I shall pass; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
'Adieu, adieu' for evermore.

LVIII.

In those sad words I took farewell:
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall
cease.

The high Muse answer'd: 'Wherefore
grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave.'

LIX.

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

My centred passion cannot move.
Nor will it lessen from to-day;
But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
With so much hope for years to come,
That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

LX.

He past; a soul of nobler tone:
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is
set
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
She finds the baseness of her lot,
Half jealous of she knows not what,
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;
She sighs amid her narrow days,
Moving about the household ways,
In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,
And tease her till the day draws by:
At night she weeps, 'How vain
am I!
How should he love a thing so low?'

LXI.

If, in thy second state sublime,
Thy ransom'd reason change replies
With all the circle of the wise,
The perfect flower of human time;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly character'd and slight,
 How dwarf'd a growth of cold and
 night,
 How blanch'd with darkness must I grow !

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man ;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
 The soul of Shakspeare love thee more.

LXII.

Tho' if an eye that's downward cast
 Could make thee somewhat blench
 or fail,
 Then be my love an idle tale,
 And fading legend of the past ;

And thou, as one that once declined,
 When he was little more than boy,
 On some unworthy heart with joy,
 But lives to wed an equal mind ;

And breathes a novel world, the while
 His other passion wholly dies,
 Or in the light of deeper eyes
 Is matter for a flying smile.

LXIII.

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
 And love in which my hound has
 part,
 Can hang no weight upon my heart
 In its assumptions up to heaven ;

And I am so much more than these,
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,
 And yet I spare them sympathy,
 And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
 As, unto vaster motions bound,
 The circuits of thine orbit round
 A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIV.

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
 As some divinely gifted man,
 Whose life in low estate began
 And on a simple village green ;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
 And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
 And breasts the blows of circum-
 stance,
 And grapples with his evil star ;

Who makes by force his merit known
 And lives to clutch the golden keys,
 To mould a mighty state's decrees,
 And shape the whisper of the throne ;

And moving up from high to higher,
 Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
 The pillar of a people's hope,
 The centre of a world's desire ;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
 When all his active powers are still,
 A distant dearness in the hill,
 A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
 While yet beside its vocal springs
 He play'd at counsellors and kings,
 With one that was his earliest mate ;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
 And reaps the labour of his hands,
 Or in the furrow musing stands ;
 'Does my old friend remember me ?'

LXV.

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt ;
 I lull a fancy trouble-tost
 With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
 A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,
 Till out of painful phases wrought
 There flutters up a happy thought,
 Self-balanced on a lightsome wing :

Since we deserved the name of friends,
 And thine effect so lives in me,
 A part of mine may live in thee
 And move thee on to noble ends.

LXVI.

You thought my heart too far diseased ;
 You wonder when my fancies play
 To find me gay among the gay,
 Like one with any trifle pleased,

The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind,
And like to him whose sight is lost ;

Whose feet are guided thro' the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand :

He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky ;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there.

LXVII.

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls :

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away ;
From off my bed the moonlight dies ;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray :

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXVIII.

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times
my breath ;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows
not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead :

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,
When all our path was fresh with
dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveillée to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,
I find a trouble in thine eye,
Which makes me sad I know not why,
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt :

But ere the lark hath left the lea
I wake, and I discern the truth ;
It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

LXIX.

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was
lost :
The streets were black with smoke
and frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door :

I wander'd from the noisy town,
I found a wood with thorny boughs :
I took the thorns to bind my brows,
I wore them like a civic crown :

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary
hairs :
They call'd me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns :

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child :
I found an angel of the night ;
The voice was low, the look was
bright ;
He look'd upon my crown and smiled :

He reach'd the glory of a hand,
That seem'd to touch it into leaf :
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand.

LXX.

I cannot see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know ; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night ;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought ;

And crowds that stream from yawning
doors,
And shoals of pucker'd faces drive ;
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores ;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXXI.

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou hast forged at last
A night-long Present of the Past
In which we went thro' summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul ?
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of
wrong
That so my pleasure may be whole ;

While now we talk as once we talk'd
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something
strange,
In walking as of old we walk'd

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

LXXII.

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar
white,
And lash with storm the streaming pane ?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
To pine in that reverse of doom,
Which sicken'd every living bloom,
And blurr'd the splendour of the sun ;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
With thy quick tears that make the
rose
Pull sideways, and the daisy close
Her crimson fringes to the shower ;

Whomight'st have heaved a windless flame
Up the deep East, or, whispering,
play'd
A chequer-work of beam and shade
Along the hills, yet look'd the same.

As wan, as chill, as wild as now ;
Day, mark'd as with some hideous
crime,
When the dark hand struck down
thro' time,
And cancell'd nature's best : but thou,

Lift as thou may'st thy burthen'd brows
Thro' clouds that drench the morning
star,
And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,
And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day ;
Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

LXXIII.

So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be,
How know I what had need of thee,
For thou wert strong as thou wert true ?

The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
The head hath miss'd an earthly
wreath :

I curse not nature, no, nor death ;
For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass ; the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds :
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age ? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
And self-infolds the large results
Of force that would have forged a name.

LXXIV.

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
To those that watch it more and more,
A likeness, hardly seen before,
Comes out—to some one of his race :

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
 I see thee what thou art, and know
 Thy likeness to the wise below,
 Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,
 And what I see I leave unsaid,
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has
 made
 His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXV.

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
 In verse that brings myself relief,
 And by the measure of my grief
 I leave thy greatness to be guess'd ;

What practice howsoe'er expert
 In fitting aptest words to things,
 Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
 Hath power to give thee as thou wert ?

I care not in these fading days
 To raise a cry that lasts not long,
 And round thee with the breeze of
 song
 To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,
 And, while we breathe beneath the
 sun,
 The world which credits what is done
 Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame ;
 But somewhere, out of human view,
 Whate'er thy hands are set to do
 Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

LXXVI.

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
 And in a moment set thy face
 Where all the starry heavens of
 space
 Are sharpen'd to a needle's end ;

Take wings of foresight ; lighten thro'
 The secular abyss to come,
 And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
 Before the mouldering of a yew ;

And if the matin songs, that woke
 The darkness of our planet, last,
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy
 bowers
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain ;
 And what are they when these remain
 The ruin'd shells of hollow towers ?

LXXVII.

What hope is here for modern rhyme
 To him, who turns a musing eye
 On songs, and deeds, and lives, that
 lie
 Foreshorten'd in the tract of time ?

These mortal lullabies of pain
 May bind a book, may line a box,
 May serve to curl a maiden's locks,
 Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
 And, passing, turn the page that tells
 A grief, then changed to something
 else,
 Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that ? My darken'd ways
 Shall ring with music all the same ;
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

LXXVIII.

Again at Christmas did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas
 hearth ;
 The silent snow possess'd the earth,
 And calmly fell our Christmas-eve :

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
 No wing of wind the region swept,
 But over all things brooding slept
 The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind, *
 Again our ancient games had place,
 The mimic picture's breathing grace,
 And dance and song and hoodman-blind

Who show'd a token of distress ?
 No single tear, no mark of pain :
 O sorrow, then can sorrow wane ?
 O grief, can grief be changed to less ?

O last regret, regret can die !
 No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
 Her deep relations are the same,
 But with long use her tears are dry.

LXXIX.

'More than my brothers are to me,'—
 Let this not vex thee, noble heart !
 I know thee of what force thou art
 To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
 As moulded like in Nature's mint ;
 And hill and wood and field did print
 The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
 Thro' all his eddying coves ; the same
 All winds that roam the twilight came
 In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
 One lesson from one book we learn'd,
 Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
 To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
 But he was rich where I was poor,
 And he supplied my want the more
 As his unlikeness fitted mine.

LXXX.

If any vague desire should rise,
 That holy Death ere Arthur died
 Had moved me kindly from his side,
 And dropt the dust on tearless eyes ;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
 The grief my loss in him had wrought,
 A grief as deep as life or thought,
 But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain ;
 I hear the sentence that he speaks ;
 He bears the burthen of the weeks
 But turns his burthen into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free ;
 And, influence-rich to soothe and
 save,
 Unused example from the grave
 Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

LXXXI.

Could I have said while he was here,
 'My love shall now no further range ;
 There cannot come a mellower
 change,
 For now is love mature in ear.'

Love, then, had hope of richer store :
 What end is here to my complaint ?
 This haunting whisper makes me
 faint,
 'More years had made me love thee more.

But Death returns an answer sweet :
 'My sudden frost was sudden gain,
 And gave all ripeness to the grain,
 It might have drawn from after-heat.'

LXXXII.

I wage not any feud with Death
 For changes wrought on form and
 face ;
 No lower life that earth's embrace
 May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
 From state to state the spirit walks ;
 And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
 Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
 The use of virtue out of earth :
 I know transplanted human worth
 Will bloom to profit, otherwhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
 The wrath that garners in my heart ;
 He put our lives so far apart
 We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXIII.

Dip down upon the northern shore,
 O sweet new-year delaying long ;
 Thou doest expectant nature wrong ;
 Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
 Thy sweetness from its proper place?
 Can trouble live with April days,
 Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
 The little speedwell's darling blue,
 Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
 Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
 Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
 That longs to burst a frozen bud
 And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXIV.

When I contemplate all alone
 The life that had been thine below,
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow
 To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
 A central warmth diffusing bliss
 In glance and smile, and clasp and
 kiss,

On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
 For now the day was drawing on,
 When thou should'st link thy life
 with one

Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;
 But that remorseless iron hour
 Made cypress of her orange flower,
 Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
 To clasp their cheeks, to call them mine.
 I see their unborn faces shine
 Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honour'd guest,
 Thy partner in the flowery walk
 Of letters, genial table-talk,
 Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills
 The lips of men with honest praise,
 And sun by sun the happy days
 Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
 And all the train of bounteous hours
 Conduct by paths of growing powers,
 To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
 Her lavish mission richly wrought,
 Leaving great legacies of thought,
 Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
 As link'd with thine in love and fate,
 And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
 To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
 And He that died in Holy Land
 Would reach us out the shining hand,
 And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
 Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
 The old bitterness again, and break
 The low beginnings of content.

LXXXV.

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
 I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
 Than never to have loved at all——

O true in word, and tried in deed,
 Demanding, so to bring relief
 To this which is our common grief,
 What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
 Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
 And whether love for him have
 drain'd
 My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
 A faithful answer from the breast,
 Thro' light reproaches, half express
 And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
 Till on mine ear this message falls,
 That in Vienna's fatal walls
 God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
 That range above our mortal state,
 In circle round the blessed gate,
 Received and gave him welcome there ;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,
 And show'd him in the fountain fresh
 All knowledge that the sons of flesh
 Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
 Whose life, whose thoughts were little
 worth,
 To wander on a darken'd earth,
 Where all things round me breathed of
 him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
 O heart, with kindest motion warm,
 O sacred essence, other form,
 O solemn ghost, O crowned soul !

Yet none could better know than I,
 How much of act at human hands
 The sense of human will demands
 By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
 I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
 His being working in mine own,
 The footsteps of his life in mine ;

A life that all the Muses deck'd
 With gifts of grace, that might ex-
 press
 All-comprehensive tenderness,
 All-subtilising intellect :

And so my passion hath not swerved
 To works of weakness, but I find
 An image comforting the mind,
 And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
 That loved to handle spiritual strife,
 Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
 But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
 For other friends that once I met ;
 Nor can it suit me to forget
 The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love : I count it crime
 To mourn for any overmuch ;
 I, the divided half of such
 A friendship as had master'd Time ;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
 Eternal, separate from fears :
 The all-assuming months and years
 Can take no part away from this :

But Summer on the steaming floods,
 And Spring that swells the narrow
 brooks,
 And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
 That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
 Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
 My old affection of the tomb,
 And my prime passion in the grave :

My old affection of the tomb,
 A part of stillness, yearns to speak :
 ' Arise, and get thee forth and seek
 A friendship for the years to come.

' I watch thee from the quiet shore ;
 Thy spirit up to mine can reach ;
 But in dear words of human speech
 We two communicate no more.'

And I, ' Can clouds of nature stain
 The starry clearness of the free?
 How is it? Canst thou feel for me
 Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall ;
 ' 'Tis hard for thee to fathom this ;
 I triumph in conclusive bliss,
 And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead ;
 Or so methinks the dead would
 say ;
 Or so shall grief with symbols play
 And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,
 That these things pass, and I shall
 prove
 A meeting somewhere, love with love,
 I crave your pardon, O my friend ;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
 I, clasping brother-hands, aver
 I could not, if I would, transfer
 The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart
 The promise of the golden hours?
 First love, first friendship, equal
 powers,
 That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
 That beats within a lonely place,
 That yet remembers his embrace,
 But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest
 Quite in the love of what is gone,
 But seeks to beat in time with one
 That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
 Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
 The primrose of the later year,
 As not unlike to that of Spring.

LXXXVI.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollest from the gorgeous
 gloom
 Of evening over brake and bloom
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
 Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
 And shadowing down the horned
 flood
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
 The full new life that feeds thy
 breath
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt
 and Death,
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
 On leagues of odour streaming far,
 To where in yonder orient star
 A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

LXXXVII.

I past beside the reverend walls
 In which of old I wore the gown;
 I roved at random thro' the town,
 And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes
 The storm their high-built organs
 make,
 And thunder-music, rolling, shake
 The prophet blazon'd on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
 The measured pulse of racing oars
 Among the willows; paced the shores
 And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt
 The same, but not the same; and
 last

Up that long walk of limes I past
 To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door:
 I linger'd; all within was noise
 Of songs, and clapping hands, and
 boys

That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
 Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
 And labour, and the changing mart,
 And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,
 But send it slackly from the string;
 And one would pierce an outer ring,
 And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he,
 Would cleave the mark. A willing
 ear
 We lent him. Who, but hung to
 hear

The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and
 grace
 And music in the bounds of law,
 To those conclusions when we saw
 The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
 In azure orbits heavenly-wise ;
 And over those ethereal eyes
 The bar of Michael Angelo.

LXXXVIII.

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
 Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
 O tell me where the senses mix,
 O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate : fierce extremes employ
 Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
 And in the midmost heart of grief
 Thy passion clasps a secret joy :

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
 I cannot all command the strings ;
 The glory of the sum of things
 Will flash along the chords and go.

LXXXIX.

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
 Of this flat lawn with dusk and
 bright ;
 And thou, with all thy breadth and
 height
 Of foliage, towering sycamore ;

How often, hither wandering down,
 My Arthur found your shadows fair,
 And shook to all the liberal air
 The dust and din and steam of town :

He brought an eye for all he saw ;
 He mixt in all our simple sports ;
 They pleased him, fresh from brawl-
 ing courts
 And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
 Immantled in ambrosial dark,
 To drink the cooler air, and mark
 The landscape winking thro' the heat :

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
 The sweep of scythe in morning
 dew,
 The gust that round the garden flew,
 And tumbled half the mellowing pears !

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
 About him, heart and ear were fed
 To hear him, as he lay and read
 The Tuscan poets on the lawn :

Or in the all-golden afternoon
 A guest, or happy sister, sung,
 Or here she brought the harp and
 flung
 A ballad to the brightening moon :

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
 Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
 And break the livelong summer day
 With banquet in the distant woods ;

Whereat we glanced from theme to
 theme,
 Discuss'd the books to love or hate,
 Or touch'd the changes of the state,
 Or threaded some Socratic dream ;

But if I praised the busy town,
 He loved to rail against it still,
 For 'ground in yonder social mill
 We rub each other's angles down,

'And merge' he said 'in form and
 gloss
 The picturesque of man and man.'
 We talk'd : the stream beneath us
 ran,
 The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

Or cool'd within the glooming wave ;
 And last, returning from afar,
 Before the crimson-circled star
 Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
 We heard behind the woodbine veil
 The milk that bubbled in the pail,
 And buzzings of the honied hours.

XC.

He tasted love with half his mind,
 Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
 Where nighest heaven, who first
 could fling
 This bitter seed among mankind ;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
Were closed with wail, resume their
life,

They would but find in child and wife
An iron welcome when they rise :

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,
To pledge them with a kindly tear,
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
To count their memories half divine ;

But if they came who past away,
Behold their brides in other hands ;
The hard heir strides about their
lands,
And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,
Not less the yet-loved sire would
make
Confusion worse than death, and
shake

The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me :
Whatever change the years have
wrought,

I find not yet one lonely thought
That cries against my wish for thee.

XCI.

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March ;

Come, wear the form by which I know
Thy spirit in time among thy peers ;
The hope of unaccomplish'd years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
May breathe, with many roses sweet,
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,
That ripple round the lonely grange ;

Come : not in watches of the night,
But where the sunbeam broodeth
warm,
Come, beauteous in thine after form,
And like a finer light in light.

XCII.

If any vision should reveal
Thy likeness, I might count it vain
As but the canker of the brain ;
Yea, tho' it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast
Together in the days behind,
I might but say, I hear a wind
Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, tho' it spake and bared to view
A fact within the coming year ;
And tho' the months, revolving near,
Should prove the phantom-warning true

They might not seem thy prophecies,
But spiritual presentiments,
And such refraction of events
As often rises ere they rise.

XCIII.

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
No spirit ever brake the band
That stays him from the native land
Where first he walk'd when clasped in clay ?

No visual shade of some one lost,
But he, the Spirit himself, may come
Where all the nerve of sense is
numb ;

Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range
With gods in un conjectured bliss,
O, from the distance of the abyss
Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter ; hear
The wish too strong for words to
name ;
That in this blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

XCIV.

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought
would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
 The spirits from their golden day,
 Except, like them, thou too canst say,
 My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
 Imaginations calm and fair,
 The memory like a cloudless air,
 The conscience as a sea at rest :

But when the heart is full of din,
 And doubt beside the portal waits,
 They can but listen at the gates,
 And hear the household jar within.

XCIV.

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
 For underfoot the herb was dry ;
 And genial warmth ; and o'er the sky
 The silvery haze of summer drawn ;

And calm that let the tapers burn
 Unwavering : not a cricket chirr'd :
 The brook alone far-off was heard,
 And on the board the fluttering urn :

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
 And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
 That haunt the dusk, with ermine
 capes

And woolly breasts and beaded eyes ;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
 From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd
 at ease,
 The white kine glimmer'd, and the
 trees

Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
 Withdrew themselves from me and
 night,
 And in the house light after light
 Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart ; I read
 Of that glad year which once had
 been,
 In those fall'n leaves which kept
 their green,
 The noble letters of the dead :

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And strangely on the silence broke
 The silent-speaking words, and
 strange
 Was love's dumb cry defying change
 To test his worth ; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
 On doubts that drive the coward back,
 And keen thro' wordy snares to track
 Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touch'd me from the
 past,
 And all at once it seem'd at last
 The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
 About empyreal heights of thought,
 And came on that which is, and
 caught

The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out
 The steps of Time—the shocks of
 Chance—

The blows of Death. At length
 my trance
 Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words ! but ah, how hard to frame
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,
 Or ev'n for intellect to reach
 Thro' memory that which I became :

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
 The knolls once more where, couch'd
 at ease,
 The white kine glimmer'd, and the
 trees

Laid their dark arms about the field :

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
 A breeze began to tremble o'er
 The large leaves of the sycamore,
 And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
 Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and
 swung
 The heavy-folded rose, and flung
 The lilies to and fro, and said

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'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away ;
 And East and West, without a
 breath,
 Mixt their dim lights, like life and
 death,
 To broaden into boundless day.

XCVI.

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
 Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-
 blue eyes
 Are tender over drowning flies,
 You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not : one indeed I knew
 In many a subtle question versed,
 Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
 But ever strove to make it true :

Perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds,
 At last he beat his music out.
 There lives more faith in honest
 doubt,
 Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd
 strength,
 He would not make his judgment
 blind,
 He faced the spectres of the mind
 And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own ;
 And Power was with him in the
 night,
 Which makes the darkness and the
 light,
 And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
 As over Sinai's peaks of old,
 While Israel made their gods of
 gold,
 Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

XCVII.

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees ;
 He finds on misty mountain-ground
 His own vast shadow glory-crown'd ;
 He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—
 I look'd on these and thought of thee
 In vastness and in mystery,
 And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,
 Their hearts of old have beat in
 tune,
 Their meetings made December June
 Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never past away ;
 The days she never can forget
 Are earnest that he loves her yet,
 Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart,
 He loves her yet, she will not weep,
 Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep
 He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
 He reads the secret of the star,
 He seems so near and yet so far,
 He looks so cold : she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,
 A wither'd violet is her bliss :
 She knows not what his greatness is,
 For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings
 Of early faith and plighted vows ;
 She knows but matters of the house,
 And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,
 She darkly feels him great and wise,
 She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
 'I cannot understand : I love.'

XCVIII.

You leave us : you will see the Rhine,
 And those fair hills I sail'd below,
 When I was there with him ; and go
 By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,
 That City. All her splendour seems
 No livelier than the wisp that gleams
 On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair
 Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me :
 I have not seen, I will not see
 Vienna ; rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts
 The birth, the bridal ; friend from
 friend
 Is oftener parted, fathers bend
 Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey
 By each cold hearth, and sadness
 flings
 Her shadow on the blaze of kings :
 And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town
 With statelier progress to and fro
 The double tides of chariots flow
 By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves ; nor more content,
 He told me, lives in any crowd,
 When all is gay with lamps, and
 loud
 With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain ;
 And wheels the circled dance, and
 breaks
 The rocket molten into flakes
 Of crimson or in emerald rain.

XCIX.

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
 So loud with voices of the birds,
 So thick with lowings of the herds,
 Day, when I lost the flower of men ;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
 On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles
 fast
 By meadows breathing of the past,
 And woodlands holy to the dead ;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
 A song that slights the coming care,
 And Autumn laying here and there
 A fiery finger on the leaves ;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
 To myriads on the genial earth,
 Memories of bridal, or of birth,
 And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,
 Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
 To-day they count as kindred souls ;
 They know me not, but mourn with me.

C.

I climb the hill : from end to end
 Of all the landscape underneath,
 I find no place that does not breathe
 Some gracious memory of my friend ;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
 Or low morass and whispering
 reed,
 Or simple stile from mead to mead,
 Or sheepwalk up the windy wold ;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
 That hears the latest linnet trill,
 Nor quarry trench'd along the hill
 And haunted by the wrangling daw ;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock ;
 Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves
 To left and right thro' meadowy
 curves,
 That feed the mothers of the flock ;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
 And each reflects a kindlier day ;
 And, leaving these, to pass away,
 I think once more he seems to die.

CI.

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
 The tender blossom flutter down,
 Unloved, that beech will gather
 brown,
 This maple burn itself away ;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
 Ray round with flames her disk of
 seed,
 And many a rose-carnation feed
 With summer spice the humming air ;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
 The brook shall babble down the
 plain,
 At noon or when the lesser wain
 Is twisting round the polar star ;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
 And flood the haunts of hern and
 crake ;
 Or into silver arrows break
 The sailing moon in creek and cove ;

Till from the garden and the wild
 A fresh association blow,
 And year by year the landscape
 grow
 Familiar to the stranger's child ;

As year by year the labourer tills
 His wonted glebe, or lops the glades ;
 And year by year our memory fades
 From all the circle of the hills.

CII.

We leave the well-beloved place
 Where first we gazed upon the sky ;
 The roofs, that heard our earliest
 cry,
 Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
 As down the garden-walks I move,
 Two spirits of a diverse love
 Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, ' Here thy boyhood sung
 Long since its matin song, and
 heard
 The low love-language of the bird
 In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, ' Yea, but here
 Thy feet have stray'd in after hours
 With thy lost friend among the
 bowers,
 And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,
 And each prefers his separate claim,
 Poor rivals in a losing game,
 That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go : my feet are set
 To leave the pleasant fields and
 farms ;
 They mix in one another's arms
 To one pure image of regret.

CIII.

On that last night before we went
 From out the doors where I was bred,
 I dream'd a vision of the dead,
 Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
 And maidens with me : distant hills
 From hidden summits fed with rills
 A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
 They sang of what is wise and good
 And graceful. In the centre stood
 A statue veil'd, to which they sang ;

And which, tho' veil'd, was known to me,
 The shape of him I loved, and love
 For ever : then flew in a dove
 And brought a summons from the sea :

And when they learnt that I must go
 They wept and wail'd, but led the
 way
 To where a little shallop lay
 At anchor in the flood below ;

And on by many a level mead,
 And shadowing bluff that made the
 banks,
 We glided winding under ranks
 Of iris, and the golden reed ;

And still as vaster grew the shore
 And roll'd the floods in grander
 space,
 The maidens gather'd strength and
 grace
 And presence, lordlier than before ;

And I myself, who sat apart
 And watch'd them, wax'd in every
 limb ;
 I felt the thews of Anakim,
 The pulses of a Titan's heart ;

As one would sing the death of war,
 And one would chant the history
 Of that great race, which is to be,
 And one the shaping of a star ;

Until the forward-creeping tides
 Began to foam, and we to draw
 From deep to deep, to where we saw
 A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
 But thrice as large as man he bent
 To greet us. Up the side I went,
 And fell in silence on his neck :

Whereat those maidens with one mind
 Bewail'd their lot ; I did them wrong :
 'We served thee here,' they said,
 'so long,

And wilt thou leave us now behind ?'

So rapt I was, they could not win
 An answer from my lips, but he
 Replying, 'Enter likewise ye
 And go with us : ' they enter'd in.

And while the wind began to sweep
 A music out of sheet and shroud,
 Westeer'd her toward a crimson cloud
 That landlike slept along the deep.

CIV.

The time draws near the birth of Christ ;
 The moon is hid, the night is still ;
 A single church below the hill
 Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
 That wakens at this hour of rest
 A single murmur in the breast,
 That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
 In lands where not a memory strays,
 Nor landmark breathes of other days,
 But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CV.

To-night ungather'd let us leave
 This laurel, let this holly stand :
 We live within the stranger's land,
 And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
 And silent under other snows :
 There in due time the woodbine
 blows,
 The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
 The genial hour with mask and
 mime ;
 For change of place, like growth of
 time,
 Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
 By which our lives are chiefly
 proved,
 A little spare the night I loved,
 And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
 Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm ;
 For who would keep an ancient form
 Thro' which the spirit breathes no more ?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast ;
 Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be
 blown ;
 No dance, no motion, save alone
 What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
 Long sleeps the summer in the seed ;
 Run out your measured arcs, and
 lead
 The closing cycle rich in good.

CVI.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light :
 The year is dying in the night ;
 Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
 The year is going, let him go ;
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more ;
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
 Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times ;
Ring out, ring out my mournful
rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CVII.

It is the day when he was born,
A bitter day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and
clangs

Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast. But fetch
the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass ;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
To make a solid core of heat ;
Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things ev'n as he were by ;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
With books and music, surely we
Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVIII.

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind :

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death ?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting
hymns ?

And on the depths of death there
swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies :
'Tis held that sorrow makes us
wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

CIX.

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never
dry ;

The critic clearness of an eye,
That saw thro' all the Muses' walk ;

Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of
man ;
Impassion'd logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course ;

High nature amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom ;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Thro' all the years of April blood ;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England ; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt ;

And manhood fused with female grace
 In such a sort, the child would twine
 A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,
 And find his comfort in thy face ;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
 Have look'd on : if they look'd in
 vain,
 My shame is greater who remain,
 Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CX.

Thy converse drew us with delight,
 The men of rathe and riper years :
 The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
 Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
 The proud was half disarm'd of
 pride,
 Nor cared the serpent at thy side
 To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,
 The flippant put himself to school
 And heard thee, and the brazen fool
 Was soften'd, and he knew not why ;

While I, thy nearest, sat apart,
 And felt thy triumph was as mine ;
 And loved them more, that they
 were thine,
 The graceful tact, the Christian art ;

Nor mine the sweetness or the skill,
 But mine the love that will not tire,
 And, born of love, the vague desire
 That spurs an imitative will.

CXI.

The churl in spirit, up or down
 Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,
 To him who grasps a golden ball,
 By blood a king, at heart a clown ;

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
 His want in forms for fashion's
 sake,
 Will let his coltish nature break
 At seasons thro' the gilded pale :

For who can always act ? but he,
 To whom a thousand memories call,
 Not being less but more than all
 The gentleness he seem'd to be,

Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
 And native growth of noble mind ;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,
 Drew in the expression of an eye,
 Where God and Nature met in light ;

And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan,
 And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXII.

High wisdom holds my wisdom less,
 That I, who gaze with temperate
 eyes
 On glorious insufficiencies,
 Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room
 Of all my love, art reason why
 I seem to cast a careless eye
 On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou ? some novel power
 Sprang up for ever at a touch,
 And hope could never hope too
 much,
 In watching thee from hour to hour,

Large elements in order brought,
 And tracts of calm from tempest
 made,
 And world-wide fluctuation sway'd
 In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

CXIII.

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise ;
 Yet how much wisdom sleeps with
 thee
 Which not alone had guided me,
 But served the seasons that may rise ;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
 In intellect, with force and skill
 To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—
 I doubt not what thou wouldst have been :

A life in civic action warm,
 A soul of highest mission sent,
 A potent voice of Parliament,
 A pillar steadfast in the storm,
 Should licensed boldness gather force,
 Becoming, when the time has birth,
 A lever to uplift the earth
 And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,
 With agonies, with energies,
 With overthrowings, and with cries,
 And undulations to and fro.

CXIV.

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall
 rail
 Against her beauty? May she mix
 With men and prosper! Who shall
 fix
 Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire :
 She sets her forward countenance
 And leaps into the future chance,
 Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
 She cannot fight the fear of death.
 What is she, cut from love and faith,
 But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
 All barriers in her onward race
 For power. Let her know her place ;
 She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
 If all be not in vain ; and guide
 Her footsteps, moving side by side
 With wisdom, like the younger child :

For she is earthly of the mind,
 But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
 O, friend, who camest to thy goal
 So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
 Who grewest not alone in power
 And knowledge, but by year and
 hour

In reverence and in charity.

CXV.

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
 Now burgeons every maze of quick
 About the flowering squares, and
 thick
 By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,
 And drown'd in yonder living blue
 The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
 The flocks are whiter down the vale,
 And milkier every milky sail
 On winding stream or distant sea ;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
 In yonder greening gleam, and fly
 The happy birds, that change their
 sky
 To build and brood ; that live their lives

From land to land ; and in my breast
 Spring wakens too ; and my regret
 Becomes an April violet,
 And buds and blossoms like the rest.

CXVI.

Is it, then, regret for buried time
 That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
 And meets the year, and gives and
 takes

The colours of the crescent prime ?

Not all : the songs, the stirring air,
 The life re-orient out of dust,
 Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
 In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret : the face will shine
 Upon me, while I muse alone ;
 And that dear voice, I once have
 known,
 Still speak to me of me and mine :

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
 For days of happy commune dead ;
 Less yearning for the friendship
 fled,
 Than some strong bond which is to be.

CXVII.

O days and hours, your work is this
 To hold me from my proper place,
 A little while from his embrace,
 For fuller gain of after bliss :

That out of distance might ensue
 Desire of nearness doubly sweet ;
 And unto meeting when we meet,
 Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
 And every span of shade that
 steals,
 And every kiss of toothed wheels,
 And all the courses of the suns.

CXVIII.

Contemplate all this work of Time,
 The giant labouring in his youth ;
 Nor dream of human love and truth,
 As dying Nature's earth and lime ;

But trust that those we call the dead
 Are breathers of an ampler day
 For ever nobler ends. They say,
 The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
 And grew to seeming-random forms,
 The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
 Till at the last arose the man ;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to
 clime,
 The herald of a higher race,
 And of himself in higher place,
 If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more ;
 Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
 Like glories, move his course, and
 show
 That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
 And heated hot with burning fears,
 And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
 And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
 The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;
 Move upward, working out the beast,
 And let the ape and tiger die.

CXIX.

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
 So quickly, not as one that weeps
 I come once more ; the city sleeps ;
 I smell the meadow in the street ;

I hear a chirp of birds ; I see
 Betwixt the black fronts long-with-
 drawn
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,
 And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
 And bright the friendship of thine
 eye ;
 And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
 I take the pressure of thine hand.

CXX.

I trust I have not wasted breath :
 I think we are not wholly brain,
 Magnetic mockeries ; not in vain,
 Like Paul with beasts, I fought with
 Death ;

Not only cunning casts in clay :
 Let Science prove we are, and then
 What matters Science unto men,
 At least to me ? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
 Hereafter, up from childhood shape
 His action like the greater ape,
 But I was *born* to other things.

CXXI.

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
 And dimmer, and a glory done :

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
 The boat is drawn upon the shore ;
 Thou listenest to the closing door,
 And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
 By thee the world's great work is
 heard
 Beginning, and the wakeful bird ;
 Behind thee comes the greater light :

The market boat is on the stream,
 And voices hail it from the brink ;
 Thou hear'st the village hammer
 clink,
 And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
 For what is one, the first, the last,
 Thou, like my present and my
 past,
 Thy place is changed ; thou art the
 same.

CXXII.

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
 While I rose up against my doom,
 And yearn'd to burst the folded
 gloom,
 To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
 The strong imagination roll
 A sphere of stars about my soul,
 In all her motion one with law ;

If thou wert with me, and the grave
 Divide us not, be with me now,
 And enter in at breast and brow,
 Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,
 And like an inconsiderate boy,
 As in the former flash of joy,
 I slip the thoughts of life and death ;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
 And every dew-drop paints a bow,
 The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
 And every thought breaks out a rose.

CXXIII.

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
 O earth, what changes hast thou
 seen !

There where the long street roars,
 hath been
 The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
 From form to form, and nothing
 stands ;
 They melt like mist, the solid lands,
 Like clouds they shape themselves and
 go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
 And dream my dream, and hold it
 true ;
 For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
 I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIV.

That which we dare invoke to bless ;
 Our dearest faith ; our ghastliest
 doubt ;
 He, They, One, All ; within, with-
 out ;
 The Power in darkness whom we guess ;

I found Him not in world or sun,
 Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye ;
 Nor thro' the questions men may
 try,
 The petty cobwebs we have spun :

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
 I heard a voice 'believe no more'
 And heard an ever-breaking shore
 That tumbled in the Godless deep ;

A warmth within the breast would melt
 The freezing reason's colder part,
 And like a man in wrath the heart
 Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear :
 But that blind clamour made me
 wise ;
 Then was I as a child that cries,
 But, crying, knows his father near ;

And what I am beheld again
 What is, and no man understands ;
 And out of darkness came the hands
 That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

CXXV.

Whatever I have said or sung,
 Some bitter notes my harp would give,
 Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
 A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth ;
 She did but look through dimmer
 eyes ;
 Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
 Because he felt so fix'd in truth :

And if the song were full of care,
 He breathed the spirit of the song ;
 And if the words were sweet and
 strong

He set his royal signet there ;

Abiding with me till I sail
 To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
 And this electric force, that keeps
 A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

CXXVI.

Love is and was my Lord and King,
 And in his presence I attend
 To hear the tidings of my friend,
 Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
 And will be, tho' as yet I keep
 Within his court on earth, and sleep
 Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
 Who moves about from place to place,
 And whispers to the worlds of space,
 In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXVII.

And all is well, tho' faith and form
 Be sunder'd in the night of fear ;
 Well roars the storm to those that
 hear
 A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
 And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again
 The red fool-fury of the Seine
 Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
 And him, the lazar, in his rags :
 They tremble, the sustaining crags ;
 The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood ;
 The fortress crashes from on high,
 The brute earth lightens to the sky,
 And the great Æon sinks in blood,

And compass'd by the fires of Hell ;
 While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
 O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
 And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXVIII.

The love that rose on stronger wings,
 Unpalsied when he met with Death,
 Is comrade of the lesser faith
 That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
 Of onward time shall yet be made,
 And throned races may degrade ;
 Yet O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
 If all your office had to do
 With old results that look like new ;
 If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
 To fool the crowd with glorious
 lies,
 To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
 To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,
 To cramp the student at his desk,
 To make old bareness picturesque
 And tuft with grass a feudal tower ;

Why then my scorn might well descend
 On you and yours. I see in part
 That all, as in some piece of art,
 Is toil coöperant to an end.

CXXIX.

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
 So far, so near in woe and weal ;
 O loved the most, when most I feel
 There is a lower and a higher ;

Known and unknown ; human, divine ;
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye ;
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not
 die,
 Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine ;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be ;
 Loved deeplier, darklier understood ;
 Behold, I dream a dream of good,
 And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXX.

Thy voice is on the rolling air ;
 I hear thee where the waters run ;
 Thou standest in the rising sun,
 And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then ? I cannot guess ;
 But tho' I seem in star and flower
 To feel thee some diffusive power,
 I do not therefore love thee less :

My love involves the love before ;
 My love is vaster passion now ;
 Tho' mix'd with God and Nature
 thou,
 I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh ;
 I have thee still, and I rejoice ;
 I prosper, circled with thy voice ;
 I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI.

O living will that shalt endure
 When all that seems shall suffer
 shock,
 Rise in the spiritual rock,
 Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
 A voice as unto him that hears,
 A cry above the conquer'd years
 To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
 The truths that never can be proved
 Until we close with all we loved,
 And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
 Demand not thou a marriage lay ;
 In that it is thy marriage day
 Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
 Since first he told me that he loved
 A daughter of our house ; nor proved
 Since that dark day a day like this ;

Tho' I since then have number'd o'er
 Some thrice three years : they went
 and came,
 Remade the blood and changed the
 flame,
 And yet is love not less, but more ;

No longer caring to embalm
 In dying songs a dead regret,
 But like a statue solid-set,
 And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
 Than in the summers that are flown,
 For I myself with these have grown
 To something greater than before ;

Which makes appear the songs I made
 As echoes out of weaker times,
 As half but idle brawling rhymes,
 The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
 That must be made a wife ere noon ?
 She enters, glowing like the moon
 Of Eden on its bridal bower :

On me she bends her blissful eyes
 And then on thee ; they meet thy look
 And brighten like the star that shook
 Betwixt the palms of paradise.

O when her life was yet in bud,
 He too foretold the perfect rose.
 For thee she grew, for thee she grows
 For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy ; full of power ;
 As gentle ; liberal-minded, great,
 Consistent ; wearing all that weight
 Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out : the noon is near,
 And I must give away the bride ;
 She fears not, or with thee beside
 And me behind her, will not fear.

For I that danced her on my knee,
 That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,
 That shielded all her life from harm
 At last must part with her to thee ;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
 Her feet, my darling, on the dead ;
 Their pensive tablets round her head,
 And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
 The ' wilt thou ' answer'd, and again
 The ' wilt thou ' ask'd, till out of
 twain

Her sweet ' I will ' has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be
 read,

Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
 By village eyes as yet unborn ;
 The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
 The joy to every wandering breeze ;
 The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
 The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour, and happier hours
 Await them. Many a merry face
 Salutes them—maidens of the place,
 That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour, behold the bride
 With him to whom her hand I gave.
 They leave the porch, they pass the
 grave
 That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,
 For them the light of life increased,
 Who stay to share the morning feast,
 Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance
 To meet and greet a whiter sun ;
 My drooping memory will not shun
 The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
 And hearts are warm'd and faces
 bloom,
 As drinking health to bride and
 groom
 We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
 Conjecture of a stiller guest,
 Perchance, perchance, among the
 rest,
 And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,
 And those white-favour'd horses
 wait ;
 They rise, but linger ; it is late ;
 Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark
 From little cloudlets on the grass,
 But sweeps away as out we pass
 To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
 And talk of others that are wed,
 And how she look'd, and what he
 said,
 And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
 The shade of passing thought, the
 wealth
 Of words and wit, the double health,
 The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance ;—till I retire :
 Dumb is that tower which spake so
 loud,
 And high in heaven the streaming
 cloud,
 And on the downs a rising fire :

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
 Till over down and over dale
 All night the shining vapour sail
 And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
 And catch at every mountain head,
 And o'er the friths that branch and
 spread
 Their sleeping silver thro' the hills ;
 And touch with shade the bridal doors,
 With tender gloom the roof, the
 wall ;
 And breaking let the splendour fall
 To spangle all the happy shores
 By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
 And, star and system rolling past,
 A soul shall draw from out the vast
 And strike his being into bounds,
 And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
 Result in man, be born and think,
 And act and love, a closer link
 Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
 On knowledge ; under whose com-
 mand
 Is Earth and Earth's, and in their
 hand
 Is Nature like an open book ;
 No longer half-akin to brute,
 For all we thought and loved and did,
 And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
 Of what in them is flower and fruit ;
 Whereof the man, that with me trod
 This planet, was a noble type
 Appearing ere the times were ripe,
 That friend of mine who lives in God,
 That God, which ever lives and loves,
 One God, one law, one element,
 And one far-off divine event,
 To which the whole creation moves.

MAUD ; A MONODRAMA.

PART I.

I.

I.

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
 Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
 The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
 And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers 'Death.'

II.

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was found,
 His who had given me life—O father ! O God ! was it well ?—
 Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dented into the ground :
 There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he fell.

III.

Did he fling himself down ? who knows ? for a vast speculation had fail'd,
 And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever wann'd with despair,
 And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken worldling wail'd,
 And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove thro' the air.

IV.

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were stirr'd
 By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a whisper'd fright,
 And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on my heart as I heard
 The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shuddering night.

V.

Villainy somewhere ! whose ? One says, we are villains all.
Not he : his honest fame should at least by me be maintained :
But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and the Hall,
Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us flaccid and drain'd.

VI.

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace ? we have made them a curse.
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own ;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone ?

VII.

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,
When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word ?
Is it peace or war ? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

VIII.

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
Of the golden age—why not ? I have neither hope nor trust ;
May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,
Cheat and be cheated, and die : who knows ? we are ashes and dust.

IX.

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine.
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie ;
Peace in her vineyard—yes !—but a company forges the wine.

X.

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,

XI.

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-bits
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,
While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he sits
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

XII.

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
Is it peace or war ? better, war ! loud war by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.

XIII.

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-decker out of the foam,
That the smooth-faced snubnosed rogue would leap from his counter and till,
And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand, home.——

XIV.

What ! am I raging alone as my father raged in his mood ?
Must I too creep to the hollow and dash myself down and die
Rather than hold by the law that I made, nevermore to brood
On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a wretched swindler's lie ?

XV.

Would there be sorrow for *me* ? there was *love* in the passionate shriek,
Love for the silent thing that had made false haste to the grave—
Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and thought he would rise and speak
And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God, as he used to rave.

XVI.

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of the moor and the main.
Why should I stay ? can a sweeter chance ever come to me here ?
O, having the nerves of motion as well as the nerves of pain,
Were it not wise if I fled from the place and the pit and the fear ?

XVII.

Workmen up at the Hall !—they are coming back from abroad ;
The dark old place will be gilt by the touch of a millionaire :
I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular beauty of Maud ;
I play'd with the girl when a child ; she promised then to be fair.

XVIII.

Maud with her venturous climbings and tumbles and childish escapes,
Maud the delight of the village, the ringing joy of the Hall,
Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when my father dangled the grapes,
Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-faced darling of all,—

XIX.

What is she now ? My dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse.
No, there is fatter game on the moor ; she will let me alone.
Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether woman or man be the worse.
I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil may pipe to his own.

II.

Long have I sigh'd for a calm : God grant I may find it at last !
It will never be broken by Maud, she has neither savour nor salt,
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her carriage past,
Perfectly beautiful : let it be granted her : where is the fault ?

All that I saw (for her eyes were downcast, not to be seen)
 Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
 Dead perfection, no more ; nothing more, if it had not been
 For a chance of travel, a paleness, an hour's defect of the rose,
 Or an underlip, you may call it a little too ripe, too full,
 Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive nose,
 From which I escaped heart-free, with the least little touch of spleen.

III.

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly meek,
 Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful folly was drown'd,
 Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on the cheek,
 Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on a gloom profound ;
 Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a transient wrong
 Done but in thought to your beauty, and ever as pale as before
 Growing and fading and growing upon me without a sound,
 Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike, half the night long
 Growing and fading and growing, till I could bear it no more,
 But arose, and all by myself in my own dark garden ground,
 Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung shipwrecking roar,
 Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd down by the wave,
 Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and found
 The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his grave.

IV.

I.

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
 In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot I be
 Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful season bland,
 When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
 Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
 The silent sapphire-spangled-marriage ring of the land ?

II.

Below me, there, is the village, and looks how quiet and small !
 And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal, and spite ;
 And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies as a Czar ;
 And here on the landward side, by a red rock, glimmers the Hall .
 And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like a light ;
 But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading star !

III.

When have I bow'd to her father, the wrinkled head of the race ?
 I met her to-day with her brother, but not to her brother I bow'd :
 I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by on the moor ;
 But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over her beautiful face.
 O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it, in being so proud ;
 Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I am nameless and poor.

IV.

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander and steal ;
 I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic, or like
 A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its way :
 For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal ;
 The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the shrike,
 And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey.

V.

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair in her flower ;
 Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game
 That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed ?
 Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour ;
 We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a brother's shame ;
 However we brave it out, we men are a little breed.

VI.

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of Earth,
 For him did his high sun flame, and his river billowing ran,
 And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's crowning race.
 As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth,
 So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man :
 He now is first, but is he the last ? is he not too base ?

VII.

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and vain,
 An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and poor ;
 The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd into folly and vice.
 I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate brain ;
 For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were more
 Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a garden of spice.

VIII.

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil.
 Who knows the ways of the world, how God will bring them about ?
 Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is wide.
 Shall I weep if a Poland fall ? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail ?
 Or an infant civilisation be ruled with rod or with knout ?
 I have not made the world, and He that made it will guide.

IX.

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways,
 Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace be my lot,
 Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies ;
 From the long-neck'd geese of the world that are ever hissing dispraise
 Because their natures are little, and, whether he heed it or not,
 Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies.

X.

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love,
The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless ill.
Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet for a wife.
Your mother is mute in her grave as her image in marble above ;
Your father is ever in London, you wander about at your will ;
You have but fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life.

V.

I.

A voice by the cedar tree
In the meadow under the Hall !
She is singing an air that is known to me,
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
A martial song like a trumpet's call !
Singing alone in the morning of life,
In the happy morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land.

II.

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny
sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English
green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her
grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that
cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid
and mean,
And myself so languid and base.

III.

Silence, beautiful voice !
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
A glory I shall not find.
Still ! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a
choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI.

I.

Morning arises stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,
And the budded peaks of the wood are
bow'd
Caught and cuff'd by the gale :
I had fancied it would be fair.

II.

Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable-ends
At the head of the village street,
Whom but Maud should I meet ?
And she touch'd my hand with a smile
so sweet,
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.

III.

And thus a delicate spark
Of glowing and growing light .
Thro' the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my
dreams,
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame ;
Till at last when the morning came
In a cloud, it faded, and seems
But an ashen-gray delight.

IV.

What if with her sunny hair,
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
Of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V.

Ah, what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?
Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile were all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if tho' her eye seem'd full
Of a kind intent to me,
What if that dandy-despot, he,
That jewell'd mass of millinery,
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence,
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,
Who wants the finer politic sense
To mask, tho' but in his own behoof,
With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—
What if he had told her yestermorn
How prettily for his own sweet sake
A face of tenderness might be feign'd,
And a moist mirage in desert eyes,
That so, when the rotten hustings shake
In another month to his brazen lies,
A wretched vote may be gain'd.

VII.

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,
Keep watch and ward, keep watch and
ward,
Or thou wilt prove their tool.
Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,
For often a man's own angry pride
Is cap and bells for a fool.

VIII.

Perhaps the smile and tender tone
Came out of her pitying womanhood,
For am I not, am I not, here alone
So many a summer since she died,
My mother, who was so gentle and
good?
Living alone in an empty house,
Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,
Where I hear the dead at midday moan,

And the shrieking rush of the wainscot
mouse,

And my own sad name in corners cried,
When the shiver of dancing leaves is
thrown

About its echoing chambers wide,
Till a morbid hate and horror have
grown

Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,
And a morbid eating lichen fixt
On a heart half-turn'd to stone.

IX.

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?

For what was it else within me wrought
But, I fear, the new strong wine of
love,

That made my tongue so stammer and
trip

When I saw the treasured splendour, her
hand,

Come sliding out of her sacred glove,
And the sunlight broke from her lip?

X.

I have play'd with her when a child;
She remembers it now we meet.
Ah well, well, well, I *may* be beguiled
By some coquettish deceit.

Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile had all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VII.

I.

Did I hear it half in a doze
Long since, I know not where?
Did I dream it an hour ago,
When asleep in this arm-chair?

II.

Men were drinking together,
Drinking and talking of me;
'Well, if it prove a girl, the boy
Will have plenty: so let it be.'

III.

Is it an echo of something
Read with a boy's delight,
Viziers nodding together
In some Arabian night?

IV.

Strange, that I hear two men,
Somewhere, talking of me;
'Well, if it prove a girl, my boy
Will have plenty: so let it be.'

VIII.

'She came to the village church,
And sat by a pillar alone;
An angel watching an urn
Wept over her, carved in stone;
And once, but once, she lifted her
eyes,
And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
To find they were met by my own;
And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat
stronger
And thicker, until I heard no longer
The snowy-banded, dilettante,
Delicate-handed priest intone;
And thought, is it pride, and mused and
sigh'd
'No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

IX.

I was walking a mile,
More than a mile from the shore,
The sun look'd out with a smile
Betwixt the cloud and the moor
And riding at set of day
Over the dark moor land,
Rapidly riding far away,
She waved to me with her hand.
There were two at her side,
Something flash'd in the sun,
Down by the hill I saw them ride,
In a moment they were gone:
Like a sudden spark
Struck vainly in the night,
Then returns the dark
With no more hope of light.

X.

I.

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
Was not one of the two at her side
This new-made lord, whose splendour
plucks
The slavish hat from the villager's head?
Whose old grandfather has lately died,
Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
Wrought, till he crept from a gutted
mine
Master of half a servile shire,
And left his coal all turn'd into gold
To a grandson, first of his noble line,
Rich in the grace all women desire,
Strong in the power that all men adore,
And simper and set their voices lower,
And soften as if to a girl, and hold
Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,
Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
New as his title, built last year,
There amid perky larches and pine,
And over the sullen-purple moor
(Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

II.

What, has he found my jewel out?
For one of the two that rode at her side
Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he:
Bound for the Hall, and I think for a
bride.
Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.
Maud could be gracious too, no doubt
To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,
A bought commission, a waxen face,
A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—
Bought? what is it he cannot buy?
And therefore splenetic, personal, base,
A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,
At war with myself and a wretched race,
Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

III.

Last week came one to the county town,
To preach our poor little army down,
And play the game of the despot kings,

Tho' the state has done it and thrice as well :

This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,

Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and rings

Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,

This huckster put down war ! can he tell

Whether war be a cause or a consequence ?
Put down the passions that make earth
Hell !

Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
Jealousy, down ! cut off from the mind
The bitter springs of anger and fear ;
Down too, down at your own fireside,
With the evil tongue and the evil ear,
For each is at war with mankind.

IV.

I wish I could hear again
The chivalrous battle-song
That she warbled alone in her joy !
I might persuade myself then
She would not do herself this great wrong,
To take a wanton dissolute boy
For a man and leader of men.

V.

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and ever by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him, what care I,
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie.

VI.

And ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be !

XI.

I.

O let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet ;
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

II.

Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite quite sure
That there is one to love me ;
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

XII.

I.

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling.

II.

Where was Maud ? in our wood ;
And I, who else, was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
Myriads blow together.

III.

Birds in our wood sang
Ringing thro' the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here
In among the lilies.

IV.

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately ;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

V.

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour !
O Maud were sure of Heaven
If lowliness could save her.

VI.

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
And left the daisies rosy.

VII.

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud ?
One is come to woo her.

VIII.

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

XIII.

I.

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?
Well, he may live to hate me yet.
Fool that I am to be vexed with his pride!
I past him, I was crossing his lands;
He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and
white,
And six feet two, as I think, he stands;
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

II.

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,
I long'd so heartily then and there
To give him the grasp of fellowship;
But while I past he was humming an air,
Stopt, and then with a riding whip
Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
And curving a contumelious lip,
Gorgonised me from head to foot
With a stony British stare.

III.

Why sits he here in his father's chair?
That old man never comes to his place:
Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?
For only once, in the village street,
Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,
A gray old wolf and a lean.
Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;
For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,
She might by a true descent be untrue;
And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet:
Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due
To the sweeter blood by the other side;
Her mother has been a thing complete,
However she came to be so allied.

And fair without, faithful within,
Maud to him is nothing akin:
Some peculiar mystic grace
Made her only the child of her mother,
And heap'd the whole inherited sin
On that huge scapegoat of the race,
All, all upon the brother.

IV.

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

XIV.

I.

Maud has a garden of roses
And lilies fair on a lawn;
There she walks in her state
And tends upon bed and bower,
And thither I climb'd at dawn
And stood by her garden-gate;
A lion ramps at the top,
He is clasped by a passion-flower.

II.

Maud's own little oak-room
(Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, when alone
She sits by her music and books
And her brother lingers late
With a roystering company) looks
Upon Maud's own garden-gate:
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as
white

As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
On the hasp of the window, and my
Delight
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost,
to glide,
Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down
to my side,
There were but a step to be made.

III.

The fancy flatter'd my mind,
And again seem'd overbold;
Now I thought that she cared for me,
Now I thought she was kind
Only because she was cold.

IV.

I heard no sound where I stood
 But the rivulet on from the lawn
 Running down to my own dark wood ;
 Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it
 swell'd
 Now and then in the dim-gray dawn ;
 But I look'd, and round, all round the
 house I beheld
 The death-white curtain drawn ;
 Felt a horror over me creep,
 Prickle my skin and catch my breath,
 Knew that the death-white curtain meant
 but sleep,
 Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool
 of the sleep of death.

XV.

So dark a mind within me dwells,
 And I make myself such evil cheer,
 That if I be dear to some one else,
 Then some one else may have much to
 fear ;
 But if I be dear to some one else,
 Then I should be to myself more dear.
 Shall I not take care of all that I think,
 Yea ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
 If I be dear,
 If I be dear to some one else.

XVI.

I.

This lump of earth has left his estate
 The lighter by the loss of his weight ;
 And so that he find what he went to
 seek,
 And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and
 drown
 His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,
 He may stay for a year who has gone for
 a week :
 But this is the day when I must speak,
 And I see my Oread coming down,
 O this is the day !
 O beautiful creature, what am I
 That I dare to look her way ;
 Think I may hold dominion sweet,
 Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,

And dream of her beauty with tender
 dread,
 From the delicate Arab arch of her feet
 To the grace that, bright and light as the
 crest
 Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,
 And she knows it not : O, if she knew it,
 To know her beauty might half undo it.
 I know it the one bright thing to save
 My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
 Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
 Perhaps from a selfish grave.

II.

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,
 Dare I bid her abide by her word ?
 Should I love her so well if she
 Had given her word to a thing so low ?
 Shall I love her as well if she
 Can break her word were it even for me ?
 I trust that it is not so.

III.

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,
 Let not my tongue be a thrall to my eye,
 For I must tell her before we part,
 I must tell her, or die.

XVII.

Go not, happy day,
 From the shining fields,
 Go not, happy day,
 Till the maiden yields.
 Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
 Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth
 When the happy Yes
 Falters from her lips,
 Pass and blush the news
 Over glowing ships ;
 Over blowing seas,
 Over seas at rest,
 Pass the happy news,
 Blush it thro' the West ;
 Till the red man dance
 By his red cedar-tree,
 And the red man's babe
 Leap, beyond the sea.

Blush from West to East,
 Blush from East to West,
 Till the West is East,
 Blush it thro' the West.
 Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
 Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth.

XVIII.

I.

I have led her home, my love, my only
 friend.
 There is none like her, none.
 And never yet so warmly ran my blood
 And sweetly, on and on
 Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
 Full to the banks, close on the promised
 good.

II.

None like her, none.
 Just now the dry-tongued laurels' patter-
 ing talk
 Seem'd her light foot along the garden
 walk,
 And shook my heart to think she comes
 once more;
 But even then I heard her close the
 door,
 The gates of Heaven are closed, and she
 is gone.

III.

There is none like her, none.
 Nor will be when our summers have de-
 ceased.
 O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
 In the long breeze that streams to thy
 delicious East,
 Sighing for Lebanon,
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here in-
 creased,
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
 And looking to the South, and fed
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,
 And haunted by the starry head
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my
 fate,

And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
 And over whom thy darkness must have
 spread
 With such delight as theirs of old, thy
 great
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
 Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from
 whom she came.

IV.

Here will I lie, while these long branches
 sway,
 And you fair stars that crown a happy day
 Go in and out 'as if at merry play,
 Who am no more so all forlorn,
 As when it seem'd far better to be born
 To labour and the mattock-harden'd
 hand,
 Than nursed at ease and brought to un-
 derstand
 A sad astrology, the boundless plan
 That makes you tyrants in your iron
 skies,
 Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
 Cold fires, yet with power to burn and
 brand
 His nothingness into man.

V.

But now shine on, and what care I,
 Who in this stormy gulf have found a
 pearl
 The countercharm of space and hollow
 sky,
 And do accept my madness, and would die
 To save from some slight shame one
 simple girl.

VI.

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death
 may give
 More life to Love than is or ever was
 In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to
 live.
 Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
 It seems that I am happy, that to me
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII.

Not die ; but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal
wrongs.

O, why should Love, like men in drink-
ing-songs,
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of
death ?

Make answer, Maud my bliss,
Maud made my Maud by that long loving
kiss,

Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this ?
'The dusky strand of Death inwoven
here

With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself
more dear.'

VIII.

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
And hark the clock within, the silver
knell

Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal
white,

And died to live, long as my pulses play ;
But now by this my love has closed her
sight

And given false death her hand, and stol'n
away

To dreamful wastes where footless fancies
dwell

Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace
affright !

Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy
spell.

My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own,
farewell ;

It is but for a little space I go :
And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night !
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the
glow

Of your soft splendours that you look so
bright ?

I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things
below,

Beat with my heart more blest than heart
can tell,

Blest, but for some dark undercurrent
woe

That seems to draw—but it shall not be
so :

Let all be well, be well.

XIX.

I.

Her brother is coming back to-night,
Breaking up my dream of delight.

II.

My dream ? do I dream of bliss ?
I have walk'd awake with Truth.
O when did a morning shine
So rich in atonement as this
For my dark-dawning youth,
Darken'd watching a mother decline
And that dead man at her heart and
mine :

For who was left to watch her but I ?
Yet so did I let my freshness die.

III.

I trust that I did not talk
To gentle Maud in our walk
(For often in lonely wanderings
I have cursed him even to lifeless things)
But I trust that I did not talk,
Not touch on her father's sin :
I am sure I did but speak
Of my mother's faded cheek
When it slowly grew so thin,
That I felt she was slowly dying
Vext with lawyers and harass'd. with
debt :

For how often I caught her with eyes all
wet,
Shaking her head at her son and sighing
A world of trouble within !

IV.

And Maud too, Maud was moved
To speak of the mother she loved
As one scarce less forlorn,
Dying abroad and it seems apart

From him who had ceased to share her
heart,

And ever mourning over the feud,
The household Fury sprinkled with blood
By which our houses are torn :
How strange was what she said,
When only Maud and the brother
Hung over her dying bed—
That Maud's dark father and mine
Had bound us one to the other,
Betrothed us over their wine,
On the day when Maud was born ;
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet
breath.

Mine, mine by a right, from birth till
death.

Mine, mine—our fathers have sworn.

v.

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat
To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so
sweet :

And none of us thought of a something
beyond,

A desire that awoke in the heart of the
child,

As it were a duty done to the tomb,
To be friends for her sake, to be recon-
ciled ;

And I was cursing them and my doom,
And letting a dangerous thought run
wild

While often abroad in the fragrant gloom
Of foreign churches—I see her there,
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer
To be friends, to be reconciled !

vi.

But then what a flint is he !

Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,
I find whenever she touch'd on me
This brother had laugh'd her down,
And at last, when each came home,
He had darken'd into a frown,

Chid her, and forbid her to speak
To me, her friend of the years before ;
And this was what had redden'd her
cheek

When I bow'd to her on the moor.

vii.

Yet Maud, altho' not blind
To the faults of his heart and mind,
I see she cannot but love him,
And says he is rough but kind,
And wishes me to approve him,
And tells me, when she lay
Sick once, with a fear of worse,
That he left his wine and horses and play,
Sat with her, read to her, night and day,
And tended her like a nurse.

viii.

Kind ? but the deathbed desire
Spurn'd by this heir of the liar—
Rough but kind ? yet I know
He has plotted against me in this,
That he plots against me still.
Kind to Maud ? that were not amiss.
Well, rough but kind ; why let it be so :
For shall not Maud have her will ?

ix.

For, Maud, so tender and true,
As long as my life endures
I feel I shall owe you a debt,
That I never can hope to pay ;
And if ever I should forget
That I owe this debt to you
And for your sweet sake to yours ;
O then, what then shall I say ?—
If ever I *should* forget,
May God make me more wretched
Than ever I have been yet !

x.

So now I have sworn to bury
All this dead body of hate,
I feel so free and so clear
By the loss of that dead weight,
That I should grow light-headed, I fear,
Fantastically merry ;
But that her brother comes, like a blight
On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

xx.

i.

Strange, that I felt so gay,
Strange, that I tried to-day

To beguile her melancholy ;
 The Sultan, as we name him,—
 She did not wish to blame him—
 But he vexed her and perplexed her
 With his worldly talk and folly :
 Was it gentle to reprove her
 For stealing out of view
 From a little lazy lover
 Who but claims her as his due ?
 Or for chilling his caresses
 By the coldness of her manners,
 Nay, the plainness of her dresses ?
 Now I know her but in two,
 Nor can pronounce upon it
 If one should ask me whether
 The habit, hat, and feather,
 Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
 Be the neater and completer ;
 For nothing can be sweeter
 Than maiden Maud in either.

II.

But to-morrow, if we live,
 Our ponderous squire will give
 A grand political dinner
 To half the squirelings near ;
 And Maud will wear her jewels,
 And the bird of prey will hover,
 And the titmouse hope to win her
 With his chirrup at her ear.

III.

A grand political dinner
 To the men of many acres,
 A gathering of the Tory,
 A dinner and then a dance
 For the maids and marriage-makers,
 And every eye but mine will glance
 At Maud in all her glory.

IV.

For I am not invited,
 But, with the Sultan's pardon,
 I am all as well delighted,
 For I know her own rose-garden,
 And mean to linger in it
 Till the dancing will be over ;
 And then, oh then, come out to me
 For a minute, but for a minute,

Come out to your own true lover,
 That your true lover may see
 Your glory also, and render
 All homage to his own darling,
 Queen Maud in all her splendour.

XXI.

Rivulet crossing my ground,
 And bringing me down from the Hall
 This garden-rose that I found,
 Forgetful of Maud and me,
 And lost in trouble and moving round
 Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
 And trying to pass to the sea ;
 O Rivulet, born at the Hall,
 My Maud has sent it by thee
 (If I read her sweet will right)
 On a blushing mission to me,
 Saying in odour and colour, ' Ah, be
 Among the roses to-night.'

XXII.

I.

Come into the garden, Maud,
 For the black bat, night, has flown,
 Come into the garden, Maud,
 I am here at the gate alone ;
 And the woodbine spices are wafted
 abroad,
 And the musk of the rose is blown.

II.

For a breeze of morning moves,
 And the planet of Love is on high,
 Beginning to faint in the light that she
 loves
 On a bed of daffodil sky,
 To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
 To faint in his light, and to die.

III.

All night have the roses heard
 The flute, violin, bassoon ;
 All night has the casement jessamine
 stirr'd
 To the dancers dancing in tune ;
 Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
 And a hush with the setting moon.

IV.

I said to the lily, 'There is but one
 With whom she has heart to be gay.
 When will the dancers leave her alone?
 She is weary of dance and play.'
 Now half to the setting moon are gone,
 And half to the rising day;
 Low on the sand and loud on the stone
 The last wheel echoes away.

V.

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes
 In babble and revel and wine.
 O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
 For one that will never be thine?
 But mine, but mine,' so I sware to the
 'rose,
 'For ever and ever, mine.'

VI.

And the soul of the rose went into my
 blood,
 As the music clash'd in the hall;
 And long by the garden lake I stood,
 For I heard your rivulet fall
 From the lake to the meadow and on to
 the wood,
 Our wood, that is dearer than all;

VII.

From the meadow your walks have left
 so sweet
 That whenever a March-wind sighs
 He sets the jewel-print of your feet
 In violets blue as your eyes,
 To the woody hollows in which we meet
 And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII.

The slender acacia would not shake
 One long milk-bloom on the tree;
 The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
 As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
 But the rose was awake all night for your
 sake,
 Knowing your promise to me;
 The lilies and roses were all awake,
 They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
 Come hither, the dances are done,
 In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
 Queen lily and rose in one;
 Shine out, little head, sunning over with
 curls,
 To the flowers, and be their sun.

X.

There has fallen a splendid tear
 From the passion-flower at the gate.
 She is coming, my dove, my dear;
 She is coming, my life, my fate;
 The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is
 near;'
 And the white rose weeps, 'She is
 late;'
 The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear;'
 And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

XI.

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
 Were it ever so airy a tread,
 My heart would hear her and beat,
 Were it earth in an earthy bed;
 My dust would hear her and beat,
 Had I lain for a century dead;
 Would start and tremble under her feet,
 And blossom in purple and red.

PART II.

I.

I.

'THE fault was mine, the fault was
 mine'—

Why am I sitting here so stunn'd and still,
 Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the
 hill?—

It is this guilty hand!—

And there rises ever a passionate cry
 From underneath in the darkening land—
 What is it, that has been done?

O dawn of Eden bright over earth and sky,
 The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising
 sun,

The fires of Hell and of Hate;

For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a word,
 When her brother ran in his rage to the gate,
 He came with the babe-faced lord ;
 Heap'd on her terms of disgrace,
 And while she wept, and I strove to be cool,
 He fiercely gave me the lie,
 Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,
 And he struck me, madman, over the face,
 Struck me before the languid fool,
 Who was gaping and grinning by :
 Struck for himself an evil stroke ;
 Wrought for his house an irredeemable woe ;
 For front to front in an hour we stood,
 And a million horrible bellowing echoes broke
 From the red-ribb'd hollow behind the wood,
 And thunder'd up into Heaven the Christless code,
 That must have life for a blow.
 Ever and ever afresh they seem'd to grow.
 Was it he lay there with a fading eye ?
 'The fault was mine,' he whisper'd, 'fly !'
 Then glided out of the joyous wood
 The ghastly Wraith of one that I know ;
 And there rang on a sudden a passionate cry,
 A cry for a brother's blood :
 It will ring in my heart and my ears, till
 I die, till I die.

II.

Is it gone? my pulses beat—
 What was it? a lying trick of the brain ?
 Yet I thought I saw her stand,
 A shadow there at my feet,
 High over the shadowy land.
 It is gone ; and the heavens fall in a gentle rain,
 When they should burst and drown with deluging storms
 The feeble vassals of wine and anger and lust,
 The little hearts that know not how to forgive :

Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold
 Thee just,
 Strike dead the whole weak race of venomous worms,
 That sting each other here in the dust,
 We are not worthy to live.

II.

I.

See what a lovely shell,
 Small and pure as a pearl,
 Lying close to my foot,
 Frail, but a work divine,
 Made so fairly well
 With delicate spire and whorl,
 How exquisitely minute,
 A miracle of design !

II.

What is it? a learned man
 Could give it a clumsy name.
 Let him name it who can,
 The beauty would be the same.

III.

The tiny cell is forlorn,
 Void of the little living will
 That made it stir on the shore.
 Did he stand at the diamond door
 Of his house in a rainbow frill ?
 Did he push, when he was uncurl'd.
 A golden foot or a fairy horn
 Thro' his dim water-world ?

IV.

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
 Of my finger-nail on the sand,
 Small, but a work divine,
 Frail, but of force to withstand,
 Year upon year, the shock
 Of cataract seas that snap
 The three decker's oaken spine
 Athwart the ledges of rock,
 Here on the Breton strand !

V.

Breton, not Briton ; here
 Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast
 Of ancient fable and fear—

Plagued with a flitting to and fro,
A disease, a hard mechanic ghost
That never came from on high
Nor ever arose from below,
But only moves with the moving eye,
Flying along the land and the main—
Why should it look like Maud ?
Am I to be overawed
By what I cannot but know
Is a juggle born of the brain ?

VI.

Back from the Breton coast,
Sick of a nameless fear,
Back to the dark sea-line
Looking, thinking of all I have lost ;
An old song vexes my ear ;
But that of Lamech is mine.

VII.

For years, a measureless ill,
For years, for ever, to part—
But she, she would love me still ;
And as long, O God, as she
Have a grain of love for me,
So long, no doubt, no doubt,
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
However weary, a spark of will
Not to be trampled out.

VIII.

Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by !
And now I remember, I,
When he lay dying there,
I noticed one of his many rings
(For he had many, poor worm) and
thought
It is his mother's hair.

IX.

Who knows if he be dead ?
Whether I need have fled ?

Am I guilty of blood ?
However this may be,
Comfort her, comfort her, all things
good,
While I am over the sea !
Let me and my passionate love go by,
But speak to her all things holy and
high,
Whatever happen to me !
Me and my harmful love go by ;
But come to her waking, find her asleep,
Powers of the height, Powers of the
deep,
And comfort her tho' I die.

III.

Courage, poor heart of stone !
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone :
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply :
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

IV.

I.

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again !

II.

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter
Than anything on earth.

III.

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee :
Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be.

IV.

It leads me forth at evening,
 It lightly winds and steals
 In a cold white robe before me,
 When all my spirit reels
 At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
 And the roaring of the wheels.

V.

Half the night I waste in sighs,
 Half in dreams I sorrow after
 The delight of early skies ;
 In a wakeful doze I sorrow
 For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
 For the meeting of the morrow,
 The delight of happy laughter,
 The delight of low replies.

VI.

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
 And a dewy splendour falls
 On the little flower that clings
 To the turrets and the walls ;
 'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
 And the light and shadow fleet ;
 She is walking in the meadow,
 And the woodland echo rings ;
 In a moment we shall meet ;
 She is singing in the meadow
 And the rivulet at her feet
 Ripples on in light and shadow
 To the ballad that she sings.

VII.

Do I hear her sing as of old,
 My bird with the shining head,
 My own dove with the tender eye ?
 But there rings on a sudden a passionate
 cry,
 There is some one dying or dead,
 And a sullen thunder is roll'd ;
 For a tumult shakes the city,
 And I wake, my dream is fled ;
 In the shuddering dawn, behold,
 Without knowledge, without pity,
 By the curtains of my bed
 That abiding phantom cold.

VIII.

Get thee hence, nor come again,
 Mix not memory with doubt,
 Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
 Pass and cease to move about !
 'Tis the blot upon the brain
 That *will* show itself without.

IX.

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
 And the yellow vapours choke
 The great city sounding wide ;
 The day comes, a dull red ball
 Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
 On the misty river-tide.

X.

Thro' the hubbub of the market
 I steal, a wasted frame,
 It crosses here, it crosses there,
 Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,
 The shadow still the same ;
 And on my heavy eyelids
 My anguish hangs like shame.

XI.

Alas for her that met me,
 That heard me softly call,
 Came glimmering thro' the laurels
 At the quiet evenfall,
 In the garden by the turrets
 Of the old manorial hall.

XII.

Would the happy spirit descend,
 From the realms of light and song,
 In the chamber or the street,
 As she looks among the blest,
 Should I fear to greet my friend
 Or to say 'Forgive the wrong,'
 Or to ask her, 'Take me, sweet,
 To the regions of thy rest' ?

XIII.

But the broad light glares and beats,
 And the shadow flits and fleets
 And will not let me be ;
 And I loathe the squares and streets,
 And the faces that one meets,
 Hearts with no love for me :

Always I long to creep
 Into some still cavern deep,
 There to weep, and weep, and weep
 My whole soul out to thee.

V.

I.

Dead, long dead,
 Long dead !
 And my heart is a handful of dust,
 And the wheels go over my head,
 And my bones are shaken with pain,
 For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
 Only a yard beneath the street,
 And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
 The hoofs of the horses beat,
 Beat into my scalp and my brain,
 With never an end to the stream of passing
 feet,
 Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
 Clamour and rumble, and ringing and
 clatter,
 And here beneath it is all as bad,
 For I thought the dead had peace, but it
 is not so ;
 To have no peace in the grave, is that
 not sad ?
 But up and down and to and fro,
 Ever about me the dead men go ;
 And then to hear a dead man chatter
 Is enough to drive one mad.

II.

Wretchedest age, since Time began,
 They cannot even bury a man ;
 And tho' we paid our tithes in the days
 that are gone,
 Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was
 read ;
 It is that which makes us loud in the
 world of the dead ;
 There is none that does his work, not
 one ;
 A touch of their office, might have
 sufficed,
 But the churchmen fain would kill their
 church,
 As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

III.

See, there is one of us sobbing,
 No limit to his distress ;
 And another, a lord of all things, praying
 To his own great self, as I guess ;
 And another, a statesman there, betraying
 His party-secret, fool, to the press ;
 And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
 The case of his patient—all for what ?
 To tickle the maggot born in an empty
 head,
 And wheedle a world that loves him not,
 For it is but a world of the dead.

IV.

Nothing but idiot gabble !
 For the prophecy given of old
 And then not understood,
 Has come to pass as foretold ;
 Not let any man think for the public
 good,
 But babble, merely for babble.
 For I never whisper'd a private affair
 Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
 No, not to myself in the closet alone,
 But I heard it shouted at once from the
 top of the house ;
 Everything came to be known.
 Who told *him* we were there ?

V.

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not
 back
 From the wilderness, full of wolves, where
 he used to lie ;
 He has gather'd the bones for his o'er-
 grown whelp to crack ;
 Crack them now for yourself, and howl,
 and die.

VI.

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
 And curse me the British vermin, the rat ;
 I know not whether he came in the
 Hanover ship,
 But I know that he lies and listens mute
 In an ancient mansion's crannies and
 holes :

Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,
 Except that now we poison our babes,
 poor souls !
 It is all used up for that.

VII.

Tell him now : she is standing here at my
 head ;
 Not beautiful now, not even kind ;
 He may take her now ; for she never
 speaks her mind,
 But is ever the one thing silent here.
 She is not *of* us, as I divine ;
 She comes from another stiller world of
 the dead,
 Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII.

But I know where a garden grows,
 Fairer than aught in the world beside,
 All made up of the lily and rose
 That blow by night, when the season is
 good,
 To the sound of dancing music and flutes :
 It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
 And I almost fear they are not roses, but
 blood ;
 For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
 He linkt a dead man there to a spectral
 bride ;
 For he, if he had not been a Sultan of
 brutes,
 Would he have that hole in his side ?

IX.

But what will the old man say ?
 He laid a cruel snare in a pit
 To catch a friend of mine one stormy
 day ;
 Yet now I could even weep to think
 of it ;
 For what will the old man say
 When he comes to the second corpse in
 the pit ?

X.

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
 Then to strike him and lay him low,
 That were a public merit, far,
 Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin ;
 But the red life spilt for a private blow—
 I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
 Are scarcely even akin.

XI.

O me, why have they not buried me deep
 enough ?
 Is it kind to have made me a grave so
 rough,
 Me, that was never a quiet sleeper ?
 Maybe still I am but half-dead ;
 Then I cannot be wholly dumb ;
 I will cry to the steps above my head
 And somebody, surely, some kind heart
 will come
 To bury me, bury me
 Deeper, ever so little deeper.

PART III.

VI.

I.

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
 Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear,
 That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing :
 My mood is changed, for it fell at a time of year
 When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
 And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
 And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
 Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
 That like a silent lightning under the stars
 She seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,

And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars—
 ‘And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
 Knowing I tarry for thee,’ and pointed to Mars
 As he glow’d like a ruddy shield on the Lion’s breast.

II.

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight
 To have look’d, tho’ but in a dream, upon eyes so fair,
 That had been in a weary world my one thing bright ;
 And it was but a dream, yet it lighten’d my despair
 When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
 That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
 The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
 Nor Britain’s one sole God be the millionaire :
 No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
 Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
 And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,
 Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,
 And the cobweb woven across the cannon’s throat
 Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more.

III.

And as months ran on and rumour of battle grew,
 ‘It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,’ said I
 (For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true),
 ‘It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
 That old hysterical mock-disease should die.’
 And I stood on a giant deck and mix’d my breath
 With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,
 Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly
 Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.

IV.

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
 Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
 And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
 Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told ;
 And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll’d !
 Tho’ many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
 For those that are crush’d in the clash of jarring claims,
 Yet God’s just wrath shall be wreak’d on a giant liar ;
 And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
 And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
 And noble thought be freer under the sun,
 And the heart of a people beat with one desire ;
 For the peace, that I deem’d no peace, is over and done,
 And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
 And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
 The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

I V.

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind ;
 It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill ;
 I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
 I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

IDYLLS OF THE KING.

IN TWELVE BOOKS.

'Flos Regum Arthurus.'—JOSEPH OF EXETER.

DEDICATION.

THESE to His Memory -- since he held
 them dear,
 Perchance as finding there unconsciously
 Some image of himself—I dedicate,
 I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
 These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me
 Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
 'Who revered his conscience as his
 king ;
 Whose glory was, redressing human wrong ;
 Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd
 to it ;
 Who loved one only and who claved to her—'
 Her—over all whose realms to their last
 isle,
 Commingled with the gloom of imminent
 war,
 The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
 Darkening the world. We have lost
 him : he is gone :
 We know him now : all narrow jealousies
 Are silent ; and we see him as he moved,
 How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd,
 wise,
 With what sublime repression of himself,
 And in what limits, and how tenderly ;
 Not swaying to this faction or to that ;
 Not making his high place the lawless
 perch
 Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
 For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of
 years
 Wearing the white flower of a blameless
 life,

Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
 In that fierce light which beats upon a
 throne,
 And blackens every blot : for where is he,
 Who dares foreshadow for an only son
 A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his ?
 Or how should England dreaming of *his*
 sons
 Hope more for these than some inheritance
 Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
 Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
 Laborious for her people and her poor—
 Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
 Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
 To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
 Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
 Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
 Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
 Beyond all titles, and a household name,
 Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still
 endure ;
 Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
 Remembering all the beauty of that star
 Which shone so close beside Thee that
 ye made
 One light together, but has past and leaves
 The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,
 His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
 The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
 The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
 The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
 Till God's love set Thee at his side again !

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other
child ;

And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land ;
And still from time to time the heathen
host

Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was
left.

And so there grew great tracts of wilder-
ness,

Wherein the beast was ever more and
more,

But man was less and less, till Arthur
came.

For first Aurelius lived and fought and
died,

And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom
one.

And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table
Round,

Drew all their petty princedoms under
him,

Their king and head, and made a realm,
and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was
waste,

Thick with wet woods, and many a beast
therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the
beast ;

So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and
bear

Came night and day, and rooted in the
fields,

And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and
then,

Her own brood lost or dead, lent her
fierce teat

To human sucklings ; and the children,
housed

In her foul den, there at their meat would
growl,

And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-
like men,

Worse than the wolves. And King
Leodogan

Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle : then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth
with blood,

And on the spike that split the mother's
heart

Spitting the child, brake on him, till,
amazed,

He knew not whither he should turn for
aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly
crown'd,

Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, ' He is not Uther's son '—the
King

Sent to him, saying, ' Arise, and help us
thou !

For here between the man and beast we
die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of
arms,

But heard the call, and came : and
Guinevere

Stood by the castle walls to watch him
pass ;

But since he neither wore on helm or
shield

The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his
knights,

And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she
saw,

One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life

Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and
pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he
drave
The heathen ; after, slew the beast, and
fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the
knight
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his
realm
Flash'd forth and into war : for most of
these,
Colleguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, ' Who
is he
That he should rule us ? who hath proven
him
King Uther's son ? for lo ! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor
voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King ;
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,
felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere ;
And thinking as he rode, ' Her father said
That there between the man and beast
they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with
me ?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams ? for saving I be
join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my
work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own
realm

Victor and lord. But were I join'd with
her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten
it,
And power on this dead world to make
it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the
tale—
When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle
bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the
world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner
broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-
blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto
blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses
run.
And now the Barons and the kings pre-
vail'd,
And now the King, as here and there
that war
Went swaying ; but the Powers who walk
the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over
him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main
might,
And mightier of his hands with every
blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the
kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemon't of Wales,
Claudias, and Clariance of Northumber-
land,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved
and brake

Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the
brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho ! they
yield !'

So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
Helaugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most. 'Thou dost not
doubt me King,

So well thine arm hath wrought for me
to-day.'

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of
God

Descends upon thee in the battle-field :
I know thee for my King !' Whereat the
two,

For each had warded either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless
love.

And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in
man :

Let chance what will, I trust thee to the
death.'

Then quickly from the foughthen field
he sent

Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodo-
gran,

Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee
well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in
heart

Debating—'How should I that am a
king,

However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and
call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel : 'Knowest thou aught of
Arthur's birth ?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and
said,

'Sir King, there be but two old men that
know :

And each is twice as old as I ; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art ; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic ; but the scholar
ran

Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share
of me :

But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the
King said,

'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser
fowl,

And reason in the chase : but wherefore
now

Do these your lords stir up the heat of
war,

Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton ? Tell me, ye your-
selves,

Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son ?'

And Ulfus and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,
spake—

For bold in heart and act and word was
he,

Whenever slander breathed against the
King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this
head :

For there be those who hate him in their
hearts,

Call him baseborn, and since his ways are
sweet,

And theirs are bestial, hold him less than
man :

And there be those who deem him more
 than man,
 And dream he dropt from heaven : but
 my belief
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's
 time
 The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that
 held
 Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
 Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne :
 And daughters had she borne him,—one
 whereof,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
 cent,
 Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
 To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
 And Uther cast upon her eyes of love :
 But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,
 So loathed the bright dishonour of his
 love,
 That Gorlois and King Uther went to war :
 And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.
 Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
 Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
 Seeing the mighty swarm about their
 walls,
 Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
 And there was none to call to but himself.
 So, compass'd by the power of the King,
 Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
 And with a shameful swiftness : after-
 ward,
 Not many moons, King Uther died him-
 self,
 Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
 After him, lest the realm should go to
 wrack.
 And that same night, the night of the new
 year,
 By reason of the bitterness and grief
 That vext his mother, all before his time
 Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
 Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
 To Merlin, to be holden far apart
 Until his hour should come ; because the
 lords
 Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
 Wild beasts, and surely would have torn
 the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known ;
 for each
 But sought to rule for his own self and
 hand,
 And many hated Uther for the sake
 Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the
 child,
 And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
 And ancient friend of Uther ; and his wife
 Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him
 with her own ;
 And no man knew. And ever since the
 lords
 Have foughten like wild beasts among
 themselves,
 So that the realm has gone to wrack :
 but now,
 This year, when Merlin (for his hour had
 come)
 Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the
 hall,
 Proclaiming, " Here is Uther's heir, your
 king,"
 A hundred voices cried, " Away with him !
 No king of ours ! a son of Gorlois he,
 Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
 Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his
 craft,
 And while the people clamour'd for a king,
 Had Arthur crown'd ; but after, the great
 lords
 Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with
 himself
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
 Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
 Or Uther's son, and born before his
 time,
 Or whether there were truth in anything
 Said by these three, there came to Came-
 liard,
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two
 sons,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
 cent ;
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the
 King
 Made feast for, saying, as they sat at
 meat,

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.

Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men

Report him ! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—

So many those that hate him, and so strong,

So few his knights, however brave they be—

Hath body enow to hold his foemen down ?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee : few,

Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him ;

For I was near him when the savage yells Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat Crown'd on the daïs, and his warriors cried,

"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will

Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,

And simple words of great authority, Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,

That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some

Were pale as at the passing of a ghost, Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes

Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round

With large, divine, and comfortable words, Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash A momentary likeness of the King :

And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross And those around it and the Crucified, Down from the casement over Arthur, smote

Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,

One falling upon each of three fair queens, Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit

And hundred winters are but as the hands Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,

Who knows a subtler magic than his own—

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.

She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,

Whereby to drive the heathen out : a mist Of incense curl'd about her, and her face Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom ;

But there was heard among the holy hymns

A voice as of the waters, for she dwells Down in a deep ; calm, whatsoever storms May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,

Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur Before him at his crowning borne, the sword

That rose from out the bosom of the lake, And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt, Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright

That men are blinded by it—on one side, Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,

"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,

And written in the speech ye speak yourself,

"Cast me away !" And sad was Arthur's face

Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,

"Take thou and strike ! the time to cast away

Is yet far-off." So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen
down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but
thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister ;' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I ;'
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd
the King.

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,'
and sign'd

To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw :
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard ; the same that
afterward

Struck for the throne, and striking found
his doom.

And then the Queen made answer,
'What know I ?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I ; and dark
Was Gorlois, yea and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness ; but this King is
fair

Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the
world."'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye
such a cry ?

But when did Arthur chance upon thee
first ?'

'O King !' she cried, 'and I will tell
thee true :

He found me first when yet a little maid :
Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty ; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of
heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead ;
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say,
can walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted
my heart,

And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me ; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him
was I,

Stern too at times, and then I loved him
not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him
well.

And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for
me,

For then I surely thought he would be
king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale :
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they
say,

Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the
mage ;

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died ; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King ; and passing forth to
breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the
chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a
night

In which the bounds of heaven and earth
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape
thereof

A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern

Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then
the two

Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great
sea fall,

Wave after wave, each mightier than the
last,

Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the
deep

And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was
borne

A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stooped and caught the babe, and
cried "The King!

Here is an heir for Uther!" And the
fringe

Of that great breaker, sweeping up the
strand,

Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.

And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same
child," he said,

"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in
peace

Till this were told." And saying this the
seer

Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of
death,

Not ever to be question'd any more

Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were
truth—

The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas—

He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in
the sky!

A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the
lea!

And truth is this to me, and that to thee;

And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free
blossom blows:

Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he
who knows?

From the great deep to the great deep he
goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but
thou

Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of
men,

And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our
time

Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will
not die,

But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,

Till these and all men hail him for their
king.'

Shespake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,
and saw,

Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom
king,

Now looming, and now lost; and on the
slope

The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd
was driven,

Fire glimpsed; and all the land from
roof and rick,

In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with
the haze

And made it thicker; while the phantom
king

Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice,
the rest

Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of
ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours ;'
 Till with a wink his dream was changed,
 the haze
 Descended, and the solid earth became
 As nothing, but the King stood out in
 heaven,
 Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and
 sent
 Ulfus, and Brastias and Bedivere,
 Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom
 he loved
 And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride
 forth
 And bring the Queen ;—and watch'd him
 from the gates :
 And Lancelot past away among the
 flowers,
 (For then was latter April) and return'd
 Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-
 vere.
 To whom arrived, by Dubric the high
 saint,
 Chief of the church in Britain, and before
 The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the
 King
 That morn was married, while in stainless
 white,
 The fair beginners of a nobler time,
 And glorying in their vows and him, his
 knights
 Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
 Far shone the fields of May thro' open
 door,
 The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
 The Sun of May descended on their King,
 They gazed on all earth's beauty in their
 Queen,
 Roll'd incense, and there past along the
 hymns
 A voice as of the waters, while the two
 Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless
 love :
 And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is
 mine.
 Let chance what will, I love thee to the
 death !'
 To whom the Queen replied with drooping
 eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the
 death !'
 And holy Dubric spread his hands and
 spake,
 'Reign ye, and live and love, and make
 the world
 Other, and may thy Queen be one with
 thee,
 And all this Order of thy Table Round
 Fulfil the boundless purpose of their
 King !'

So Dubric said ; but when they left the
 shrine
 Great Lords from Rome before the portal
 stood,
 In scornful stillness gazing as they past ;
 Then while they paced a city all on fire
 With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets
 blew,
 And Arthur's knighthood sang before the
 King :—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white
 with May ;
 Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd
 away !
 Blow thro' the living world—"Let the
 King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in
 Arthur's realm ?
 Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon
 helm,
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
 King reign.

'Strike for the King and live ! his
 knights have heard
 That God hath told the King a secret
 word.
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
 King reign.

'Blow trumpet ! he will lift us from
 the dust.
 Blow trumpet ! live the strength and die
 the lust !
 Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
 the King reign.

'Strike for the King and die ! and if
thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the
highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
the King reign

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his
May !
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day !
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we
the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret
thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
King reign.'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their
hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords
from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim'd their tribute as of
yore.

But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have
sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their
King ;
The old order changeth, yielding place
to new ;
And we that fight for our fair father
Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and
old
To drive the heathen from your Roman
wall,
No tribute will we pay : ' so those great
lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a
space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength
the King
Drew in the petty principdoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-
came
The heathen hordes, and made a realm
and reign'd.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.
GERAINT AND ENID.
BALIN AND BALAN.
MERLIN AND VIVIEN

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.
THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELLEAS AND ETTARKE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted
Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as
a false knight
Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold
snows
And mine is living blood : thou dost His
will,

The Maker's, and not knowest, and I
that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good
mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and
whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a
child !
Good mother is bad mother unto me !
A worse were better ; yet no worse
would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put
force
To weary her ears with one continuous
prayer,

Until she let me fly discaçed to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence
swoop

Down upon all things base, and dash
them dead,

A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain,
when he came

With Modred hither in the summertime,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven
knight.

Modred for want of worthier was the
judge.

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he
said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd against me,"
said so—he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute;
For he is alway sullen : what care I ?

And Gareth went, and hovering round
her chair

Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still
the child,

Sweet mother, do ye love the child ?'
She laugh'd,

'Thou art but a wild-goose to question
it.'

'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he
said,

'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story.' 'Yea, my well-
beloved,

An 'twere but of the goose and golden
eggs.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of
mine

Was finer gold than any goose can lay ;
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.
And there was ever haunting round the
palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and
thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon
it,

Then were I wealthier than a leash of
kings."

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his child-
hood, caught

And stay'd him, "Climb not lest thou
break thy neck,

I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake
his neck,

But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away.'

To whom the mother said,

'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself
and climb'd,

And handed down the golden treasure to
him.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Gold ? said I gold ?—ay then, why he,
or she,

Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of
been

Mere gold—but this was all of that true
steel,

Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings play'd about it in the
storm,

And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the
nest,

That sent him from his senses : let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and
said,

'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness ?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd
out !

For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies
there

A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiabie,

No more ; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks,
nor knows.

And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love :
Stay therefore thou ; red berries charm
the bird,

And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the
wars,

Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often
chance

In those brain-stunning shocks, and
tourney-falls,

Frights to my heart ; but stay : follow
the deer

By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns ;
So make thy manhood mightier day by
day ;

Sweet is the chase : and I will seek thee
out

Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone
year,

Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness

I know not thee, myself, nor anything.

Stay, my best son ! ye are yet more boy
than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for
child,

Hear yet once more the story of the child.
For, mother, there was once a King, like
ours.

The prince his heir, when tall and
marriageable,

Ask'd for a bride ; and thereupon the
King

Set two before him. One was fair,
strong, arm'd—

But to be won by force—and many men
Desired her ; one, good lack, no man
desired.

And these were the conditions of the
King :

That save he won the first by force, he
needs

Must wed that other, whom no man
desired,

A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died
of her.

And one—they call'd her Fame ; and
one,—O Mother,

How can ye keep me tether'd to you—
Shame.

Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer ? follow the Christ, the
King,

Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow
the King—

Else, wherefore born ?'

To whom the mother said,

'Sweet son, for there be many who deem
him not,

Or will not deem him, wholly proven
King—

Albeit in mine own heart I knew him
King,

When I was frequent with him in my
youth,

And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted
him

No more than he, himself ; but felt him
mine,

Of closest kin to me : yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine
all,

Life, limbs, for one that is not proven
King ?

Stay, till the cloud that settles round his
birth

Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not
an hour,

So that ye yield me—I will walk thro'
fire,

Mother, to gain it—your full leave to
go.

Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd
Rome

From off the threshold of the realm, and
crush'd

The Idolaters, and made the people free ?
Who should be King save him who
makes us free ?'

So when the Queen, who long had
sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which
he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro'
fire?

Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the
smoke.

Ay, go then, an ye must : only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee
knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand.'

And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to
the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking
at him,
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to
Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve for meats and
drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-
knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the
bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and
a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when
her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely-
proud
To pass thereby; so should he rest with
her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of
arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must
obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;

For hence will I, disguised, and hire my-
self

To serve with scullions and with kitchen-
knaves;

Nor tell my name to any—no, not the
King.'

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's
eye

Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he
turn'd,

Perplexed his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with
full voice

Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to
dawn,

He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his
birth,

Before the wakeful mother heard him,
went.

The three were clad like tillers of the
soil.

Southward they set their faces. The birds
made

Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into
green,

And the live green had kindled into
flowers,

For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on
the plain

That broaden'd toward the base of Came-
lot,

Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal
mount,

That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city
flash'd;

At times the spires and turrets half-way
down

Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great
gate shone

Only, that open'd on the field below :
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were
 amazed,
 One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord.
 Here is a city of Enchanters, built
 By fairy Kings.' The second echo'd him,
 'Lord, we have heard from our wise man
 at home
 To Northward, that this King is not the
 King,
 But only changeling out of Fairyland,
 Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
 And Merlin's glamour.' Then the first
 again,
 'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
 But all a vision.'

Gareth answer'd them

With laughter, swearing he had glamour
 enow
 In his own blood, his pryncedom, youth
 and hopes,
 To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
 So push'd them all unwilling toward the
 gate.
 And there was no gate like it under
 heaven.
 For barefoot on the keystone, which was
 lined
 And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
 The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
 Wept from hersides as water flowing away;
 But like the cross her great and goodly
 arms
 Stretch'd under all the cornice and
 upheld:
 And drops of water fell from either hand;
 And down from one a sword was hung,
 from one
 A censer, either worn with wind and
 storm;
 And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
 And in the space to left of her, and right,
 Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
 New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
 Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
 Were giddy gazing there; and over all
 High on the top were those three Queens,
 the friends
 Of Arthur, who should help him at his
 need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a
 space
 Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
 The dragon-boughts and elvish emblem-
 ings
 Began to move, seethe, twine and curl:
 they call'd
 To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive.'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his
 eyes
 So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to
 move.
 Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
 Back from the gate started the three, to
 whom
 From out thereunder came an ancient
 man,
 Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my
 sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,
 Who leaving share in furrow come to see
 The glories of our King: but these, my
 men,
 (Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
 Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
 From Fairyland; and whether this be built
 By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;
 Or whether there be any city at all,
 Or all a vision: and this music now
 Hath scared them both, but tell thou
 these the truth.'

Then that old Seer made answer play-
 ing on him
 And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good
 ship sail
 Keel upward, and mast downward, in
 the heavens,
 And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air:
 And here is truth; but an it please thee
 not,
 Take thou the truth as thou hast told it
 me.
 For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King
 And Fairy Queens have built the city, son;
 They came from out a sacred mountain-
 cleft
 Toward the sunrise, each with harp in
 hand,

And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; tho' some there be that
hold

The King a shadow, and the city real :
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou
pass

Beneath this archway, then wilt thou
become

A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the
which

No man can keep ; but, so thou dread to
swear,

Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is
built

To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.'

Gareth spake

Anger'd, 'Old Master, reverence thine
own beard

That looks as white as utter truth, and
seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath
been

To thee fair-spoken ?'

But the Seer replied,

'Know ye not then the Riddling of the
Bards ?

"Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion" ?

I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou
art.

And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the
plain ;

Whom Gareth looking after said, 'My
men,

Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I :
Well, we will make amends.'

With all good cheer

He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with
his twain

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in
stone ;

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at
Arthur's court,

Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and every-
where

At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening
peak

And pinnacle, and had made it spire to
heaven.

And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall : his arms
Clash'd ; and the sound was good to
Gareth's ear.

And out of bower and casement shyly
glanced

Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of
love ;

And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the
King

Throned, and delivering doom — and
look'd no more —

But felt his young heart hammering in his
ears,

And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a
lie

The truthful King will doom me when I
speak.'

Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about
the throne,

Clear honour shining like the dewy star

Of dawn, and faith in their great King,
with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King,
'A boon, Sir King ! Thy father, Uther,
reft

From my dead lord a field with violence :
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not ; and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field.'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye?
gold or field?'
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my
lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's
eye.'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field
again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use
thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accurs'd, who from the wrongs his father
did
Would shape himself a right !'

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ! Thine enemy, King,
am I.

With thine own hand thou slewest my
dear lord,

A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and
fought

Against thee, saying thou wert basely
born.

I held with these, and loathe to ask thee
aught.

Yet lo ! my husband's brother had my
son

Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved
him dead ;

And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left
the son.

So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle
for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my
son.'

Then strode a good knight forward,
crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the
man.'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and
cried,
'A boon, Sir King ! ev'n that thou grant
her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full
hall—
None ; or the wholesome boon of gyve
and gag.'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the
wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves
her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and
hates !
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the
flames,
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee
dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue : but get thee
hence—
Lest that rough humour of the kings of
old

Return upon me ! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise ; lay him low and slay him
not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the
right,
According to the justice of the King :
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man
shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of
Mark,
A name of evil savour in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he
bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as
shines

A field of charlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest
gold,
Which down he laid before the throne,
and knelt,
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot ;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram,
knight,
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honour all the
more ;
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of
gold,
In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to
rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smoulder'd there. 'The
goodly knight !
What ! shall the shield of Mark stand
among these ?'
For, midway down the side of that long
hall
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and
some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony
shields,—
Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the
hearth.
And under every shield a knight was
named :
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall ;
When some good knight had done one
noble deed,
His arms were carven only ; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also ; but if none,
The shield was blank and bare without a
sign
Saving the name beneath ; and Gareth
saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and
bright,
And Modred's blank as death ; and
Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

' More like are we to reave him of his
crown
Than make him knight because men call
him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stay'd
their hands
From war among themselves, but left
them kings ;
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them
we enroll'd
Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name
of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl :
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from
our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever—craven—a man of
plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside am-
bushings—
No fault of thine : let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satis-
fied—
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand
be seen !'

And many another suppliant crying
came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast
and man,
And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his
men,
Approach'd between them toward the
King, and ask'd,
' A boon, Sir King (his voice was all
ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to
serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-
knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my
name.
Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King,

'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!

But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,

The master of the meats and drinks, be thine.'

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien

Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
Root-bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now!

This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,

God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,

Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'

Then Lancelot standing near, 'Sir Seneschal,

Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray,
and all the hounds;

A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:

Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands

Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—

But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,

Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.'

Then Kay, 'What murmur'st thou of mystery?

Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?

Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For horse and armour: fair and fine,
forsooth!

Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it

That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day

Undo thee not—and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent

The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,

And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knives.

And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
Would hustle and harry him, and labour him

Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,

Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself

With all obedience to the King, and wrought

All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
And when the thralls had talk among themselves,

And one would praise the love that linkt the King

And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life

In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—

For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—

Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,
How once the wandering forester at dawn,

Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,

Anaked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
'He passes to the Isle Avilion,

He passes and is heal'd and cannot die'—
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were

foul,

Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud

That first they mock'd, but, after, reverenced him.

Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale
Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way

Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates

Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal,

would come

Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all
apart.

Or when the thralls had sport among
themselves,

So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone
Was counted best ; and if there chanced
a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw
the knights

Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse
reel, the boy

Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the
thralls ;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good
Queen,

Repentant of the word she made him
swear,

And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent
moon,

Arms for her son, and loosed him from
his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of
Lot

With whom he used to play at tourney
once,

When both were children, and in lonely
haunts

Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth
joy.

He laugh'd ; he sprang. ' Out of the
smoke, at once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay,
the King's—

Descend into the city : ' whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him
all.

' I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in
a tilt

For pastime ; yea, he said it : joust can I.

Make me thy knight—in secret ! let my
name

Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I
spring

Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush,
and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd
him,

' Son, the good mother let me know thee
here,

And sent her wish that I would yield thee
thine.

Make thee my knight ? my knights are
sworn to vows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from
his knees,

' My King, for hardihood I can promise
thee.

For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and
drinks !

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King—
' Make thee my knight in secret ? yea,
but he,

Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must
know.'

' Let Lancelot know, my King, let
Lancelot know,

Thy noblest and thy truest !'

And the King—
' But wherefore would ye men should
wonder at you ?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, their
King,

And the deed's sake my knighthood do
the deed,

Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd,

'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking
of it?

Let be my name until I make my name !
My deeds will speak : it is but for a day.'

So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwill-
ingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to
him.

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
'I have given him the first quest : he is
not proven.

Look therefore when he calls for this in
hall,

Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor
slain.'

Then that same day there past into the
hall

A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-
blossom,

Hawk-eyes ; and lightly was her slender
nose

Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower ;
She into hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe
without,

See to the foe within ! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye
there?

Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were
king,

Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-
cloth

From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I nor
mine

Rest : so my knighthood keep the vows
they swore,

The wastest moorland of our realm shall
be

Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.

What is thy name ? thy need ?'

'My name ?' she said—

'Lynette my name ; noble ; my need, a
knight

To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than my-
self.

She lives in Castle Perilous : a river
Runs in three loops about her living-
place ;

And o'er it are three passings, and three
knights

Defend the passings, brethren, and a
fourth

And of that four the mightiest, holds her
stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with
him :

And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory : but she will not
wed

Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to
crush

All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these
four,

Who be they ? What the fashion of the
men ?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they
will ;

Courteous or bestial from the moment,
such

As have nor law nor king ; and three of
these

Proud in their fantasy call themselves the
Day,

Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Even-
ing-Star,

Being strong fools ; and never a whit more
wise

The fourth, who alway rideth arm'd in
black,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
 He names himself the Night and oftener
 Death,
 And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
 To show that who may slay or scape the
 three,
 Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
 And all these four befools, but mighty men,
 And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he
 rose,
 A head with kindling eyes above the
 throng,
 'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—
 for he mark'd
 Kay near him groaning like a wounded
 bull—
 'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-
 knave am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
 am I,
 And I can topple over a hundred such.
 Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing
 at him,
 Brought down a momentary brow.
 'Rough, sudden,
 And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
 Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame,
 pride, wrath
 Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
 'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief
 knight,
 And thou hast given me but a kitchen-
 knave.'
 Then ere a man in hall could stay her,
 turn'd,
 Fled down the lane of access to the King,
 Took horse, descended the slope street,
 and past
 The weird white gate, and paused without,
 beside
 The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-
 knave.'

Now two great entries open'd from the
 hall,
 At one end one, that gave upon a range

Of level pavement where the King would
 pace

At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
 And down from this a lordly stairway
 sloped

Till lost in blowing trees and tops of
 towers;

And out by this main doorway past the
 King.

But one was counter to the hearth, and
 rose

High that the highest-crested helm could
 ride

Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry
 fled

The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
 Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the
 door

King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a
 town,

A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
 The two that out of north had follow'd
 him:

This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that
 held

The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth
 loosed

A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to
 heel,

A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
 And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,
 That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and
 flash'd as those

Dull-coated things, that making slide
 apart

Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there
 burns

A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
 So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.

Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the
 shield

And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of
 grain

Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and
 tipt

With trenchant steel, around him slowly
 prest

The people, while from out of kitchen came
 The thralls in throng, and seeing who had
 work'd

Lustier than any, and whom they could
but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and
cried,
'God bless the King, and all his fellow-
ship !'
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without
the gate.

So Gareth past with joy ; but as the cur
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his
cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being
named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle.

'Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms—the King hath past
his time—
My scullion knave ! Thralls to your work
again,
For an your fire be low ye kindle mine !
W'ill there be dawn in West and eve in
East?
Begone !—my knave !—belike and like
enow
Some old head-blow not heeded in his
youth
So shook his wits they wander in his
prime—
Crazed ! How the villain lifted up his
voice,
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-
knave.
Tut : he was tame and meek enow with
me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
Well—I will after my loud knave, and
learn
Whether he know me for his master yet.
Out of the smoke he came, and so my
lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the
mire—
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again.'

But Lancelot said,
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the
King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee?
Abide : take counsel ; for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and
sword.'
'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are
overfine
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtes-
ies :'
Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the
gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the
King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt,
at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven ! O fie
upon him—
His kitchen-knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier
than he)
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow.' She thereat, as one
That smells a foul-flesh'd agaric in the
holt,
And deems it carrion of some woodland
thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,
'Hence !
Avoid, thou smell'st all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind,' for there
was Kay.
'Knowest thou not me? thy master? I
am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth.'

And Gareth to him,
'Master no more ! too well I know thee,
ay—
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's
hall.'

'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they
shock'd, and Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she
fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou,' scullion, in my
fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the
more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy
master—thou!—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—
to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently,
'say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he
talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the man-
ner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with,
knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the
face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd
again
Down the long avenues of a boundless
wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the
only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the
wood;

The wood is nigh as full of thieves as
leaves:

If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of
thine?

Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the
only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted,
saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand
pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a
mere,
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and
shouts

Ascended, and there brake a servingman
Flying from out of the black wood, and
crying,

'They have bound my lord to cast him in
the mere.'

Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the
wrong'd,

But straitlier bound am I to bide with
thee.'

And when the damsel spake contempt-
uously,

'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the
pines

He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd
nigh the mere,

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and
reed,

Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him
in it.

Three with good blows he quieted, but
three

Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed
the stone

From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free
feet

Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff
 rogues
 Had wreak'd themselves on me ; good
 cause is theirs
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin
 here
 Drown him, and with a stone about his
 neck ;
 And under this wan water many of them
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have
 saved a life
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this
 wood.
 And fain would I reward thee worship-
 fully.
 What guerdon will ye ?'

Gareth sharply spake,
 'None ! for the deed's sake have I done
 the deed,
 In uttermost obedience to the King.
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbour-
 age ?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well
 believe
 You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh
 Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-
 knave !—
 But deem not I accept thee aught the
 more,
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
 Down on a rout of craven foresters.
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
 Nay—for thou smell'st of the kitchen
 still.
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,
 Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the
 wood,
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
 His towers where that day a feast had
 been
 Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
 And many a costly cate, received the
 three.

And there they placed a peacock in his
 pride
 Before the damsel, and the Baron set
 Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much dis-
 courtesy,
 Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at myside.
 Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's
 hall,
 And pray'd the King would grant me
 Lancelot
 To fight the brotherhood of Day and
 Night—

The last a monster unsubduable
 Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
 Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-
 knave,

"The quest is mine ; thy kitchen-knave
 am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
 am I."

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
 "Go therefore," and so gives the quest
 to him—

Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
 Than ride abroad redressing women's
 wrong,
 Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed,
 the lord

Now look'd at one and now at other, left
 The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
 And, seating Gareth at another board,
 Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-
 knave, or not,
 Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
 And whether she be mad, or else the
 King,
 Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
 I ask not : but thou strikest a strong
 stroke,
 For strong thou art and goodly there-
 withal,
 And saver of my life ; and therefore now,
 For here be mighty men to joust with,
 weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel
back

To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon ; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life.'

And Gareth said,
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and
Hell.'

So when, next morn, the lord whose
life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on
their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth
spake,
'Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she
replied,

'I fly no more : I allow thee for an
hour.
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore,
methinks
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt
thou, fool ?

For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee : then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding
me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courte-
tously,
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt
find
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's
son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long
loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they
came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and
steep ; the stream
Full, narrow ; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap ; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold

In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in
hue,

Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this
he,

The champion thou hast brought from
Arthur's hall ?

For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,'
she said,

'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter
scorn

Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee
here

His kitchen-knave : and look thou to
thyself :

See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd : he is not knight
but knave.'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the
Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, ap-
proach,

Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair
girls

In gilt and rosy raiment came : their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd ; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with
gem

Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave
a shield

Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was
brought,

Glorying ; and in the stream beneath him,
shone

Immingled with Heaven's azure waver-
ingly,

The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore
stare ye so ?
Thou shakest in thy fear : there yet is
time :

Flee down the valley before he get to horse.

Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,

Far liefer had I fight a score of times Than hear thee so missay me and revile. Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;

But truly foul are better, for they send That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know

That I shall overthrow him.'

And he that bore

The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,

'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me! Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.

For this were shame to do him further wrong

Than set him on his feet, and take his horse

And arms, and so return him to the King.

Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.

Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest.

I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'

He spake; and all at fiery speed the two Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge, Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand

He drove his enemy backward down the bridge,

The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke

Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my life: I yield.'

And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me Good—I accord it easily as a grace.'

She reddening, 'Insolent scullion: I of thee?

I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!'

'Then shall he die.' And Gareth there unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd, 'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay

One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight, Thy life is thine at her command. Arise

And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See

thou crave His pardon for thy breaking of his laws. Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.

Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou,

Lead, and I follow.'

And fast away she fled.

Then when he came upon her, spake, 'Methought,

Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:

Iscent it twenty-fold.' And then she sang, "O morning star" (not that tall felon there

Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness Or some device, hast foully overthrown),

"O morning star that smilest in the blue, O star, my morning dream hath proven true,

Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me."

'But thou begone, take counsel, and away,

For hard by here is one that guards a ford—

The second brother in their fool's parable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.
Care not for shame : thou art not knight
but knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laugh-
ingly,
'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my
co-mates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his
coat,
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle
with it.
And such a coat art thou, and thee the
King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight
or knave—
The knave that doth thee service as full
knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing.'

'Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a
knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

'Fair damsel, you should worship me
the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine
enemies.'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet
thy match.'

So when they touch'd the second river-
loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday
Sun
Beyond a ragingshallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the
fierce shield,
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying
blots
Before them when he turn'd from watch-
ing him.

He from beyond the roaring shallow
roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches
here?'

And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's
hall

Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath
his arms.'

'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a
red

And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the
ford,

Whom Gareth met midstream : no room
was there

For lance or tourney-skill : four strokes
they struck

With sword, and these were mighty ; the
new knight

Had fear he might be shamed ; but as the
Sun

Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the
fifth,

The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream,
the stream

Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the
ford ;

So drew him home ; but he that fought
no more,

As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded ; and Gareth sent him to the
King.

'Myself when I return will plead for thee.'

'Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.

'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed
again?'

'Nay, not a point : nor art thou victor
here.

There lies a ridge of slate across the ford ;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I
saw it.

"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom
thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or
pain,

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly : twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of lovesong or of
love?

Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly
born,

Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea,
perchance,—

"O dewy flowers that open to the
sun,

O dewy flowers that close when day is
done,

Blow sweetly : twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of flowers, except,
belike,

To garnish meats with? hath not our
good King

Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchen-
dom,

A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye
round

The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's
head?

Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries
and bay.

"O birds, that warble to the morning
sky,

O birds that warble as the day goes by,

Sing sweetly : twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of birds, lark,
mavis, merle,

Linnet? what dream ye when they utter
forth

May-music growing with the growing
light,

Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the
snare

(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not
now

Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their
allegory.'

For there beyond a bridge of treble
bow,

All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the
knight,

That named himself the Star of Evening,
stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the
madman there

Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she
cried,

'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armour off him, these will turn the
blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the
bridge,

'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up : but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel
cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's
heaven

With all disaster unto thine and thee !

For both thy younger brethren have gone
down

Before this youth ; and so wilt thou, Sir
Star ;

Art thou not old ?'

'Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty
boys.'

Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in
brag !

But that same strength which threw the
Morning Star

Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.

'Approach and arm me !' With slow
steps from out

An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought
a helm

With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of
Even

Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his em-
blem, shone.

But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him
again,

But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his
knees,

So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great
heart,

Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not
put us down!'

He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to
strike

Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the
while,

'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken,
O good knight-knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the
knights—

Shame me not, shame me not. I have
prophesied—

Strike, thou art worthy of the Table
Round—

His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd
skin—

Strike—strike—the wind will never
change again.'

And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off
him,

But lash'd in vain against the harden'd
skin,

And could not wholly bring him under,
more

Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge
on ridge,

The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and
springs

For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the
hilt.

'I have thee now;' but forth that other
sprang,

And, all unknighlike, writhed his wiry
arms

Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the
bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and
cried,

'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said,
'I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-
knaves.

"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy
plain,
O rainbow with three colours after rain,
Shine sweetly: thrice my love hath smiled
on me."

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had
added—Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a
knave,—

Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought
the King

Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy
pardon, friend,

For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek
withal

As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou
art.

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to
blame,

Saving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking,
one

Not fit to cope your quest. You said
your say;

Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth!
I hold

He scarce is knight, yea but half-man,
nor meet

To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat
At any gentle damsel's waywardness.

Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings
fought for me:

And seeing now thy words are fair,
methinks

There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his
great self,

Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour

When the lone henn forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching,
dreams

Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at
him,

And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
Where bread and baken meats and good
red wine

Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited
him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein
Were slabs of rock with figures, knights
on horse

Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning
hues.

'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once
was here,

Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the
rock

The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have suck'd their alle-
gory

From these damp walls, and taken but
the form.

Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt
and read—

In letters like to those the vexillary
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming
Gelt—

'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MERIDIES'—
'HESPERUS'—

'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures,
armed men,

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a Shape that
fled

With broken wings, torn raiment and
loose hair,

For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.
'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first

Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter
chanced,

The damsel's headlong error thro' the
wood—

Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-
loops—

His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the
star

Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him,
cried,

'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my
friend.'

And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
But when they closed—in a moment—at
one touch

Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the
world—

Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his
hands

He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon
Lynette:

Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and
overthrown,

And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast
in vain?'

'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
Of old King Lot and good Queen Belli-
cent,

And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by
whom

I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—

Out, sword; we are thrown!' And
Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince,

O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness

Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot!—
thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar
the boast
Thy brethren of thee make—which could
not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot
—thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and
wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my
knave,
Who being still rebuked, would answer still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if
knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd
and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd
upon:
And doubtful whether I and mine be
scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's
hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave,
prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever.'

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight
art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be
you wise
To call him shamed, who is but over-
thrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many
a time.
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven; and
thy good horse

And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance
of thine.

Well hast thou done; for all the stream
is freed,

And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his
foes,

And when reviled, hast answer'd graci-
ously,

And makest merry when overthrown.
Prince, Knight,

Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our
Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he
told

The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being
fool'd

Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and
drinks

And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.

Seek, till we find.' And when they
sought and found,

Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden
gazed.

'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to
sleep hast thou.

Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to
him

As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vex'd his day, but blesses him asleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the
honeysuckle

In the hush'd night, as if the world were
one

Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot!—and she clapt
her hands—

'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn
have I,

Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with
him.

Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;

Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you name,
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all.'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield;
'Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue—fire—thro' one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
Hence: let us go.'

Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan,

In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.

A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe falls!'

An owl whoopt: 'Hark the victor pealing there!'

Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,

'Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must fight:

I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now

To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have done;
Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow
In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,
Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth.'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest.'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice.

Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him

As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe!

Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,

Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,

The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield.'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for this,

Belike he wins it as the better man:
Thus—and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself;

How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,

And so fill up the gap where force might fail

With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules. I know
but one—
To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the
joust,
And seen thy way.' 'Heaven help thee,'
sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that
grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they
rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd,
'There.'
And all the three were silent seeing,
pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the
marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long
black horn
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth
graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the
horn.
Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again
he blew;
Whereon were hollow tramlings up and
down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows
past;
Till high above him, circled with her
maids,
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy; but when
the Prince
Three times had blown—after long hush
—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thro' those black foldings, that which
housed therein.
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack
arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs
of Death,

And crown'd with fleshless laughter—
some ten steps—
In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—
advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake
no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength
of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God
hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and
the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with
mantling flowers
As if for pity?' But he spake no word;
Which set the horror higher: a maiden
swoon'd;
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and
wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and
Death;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his
helm;
And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm
blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were
aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely
neigh'd,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded
forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror,
saw
That Death was cast to ground, and
slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the
skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the
helm
As thoroughly as the skull; and out from
this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying,
'Knight,

Slay me not : my three brethren bad me
do it,

To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be
past.'

Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair
child,

What madness made thee challenge the
chief knight

Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad
me do it.

They hate the King, and Lancelot, the
King's friend,

They hoped to slay him somewhere on
the stream,

They never dream'd the passes could be
past.'

Then sprang the happier day from
underground ;

And Lady Lyonors and her house, with
dance

And revel and song, made merry over
Death,

As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the
quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's
court,

A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of
Heaven.

And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved
Geraint

To make her beauty vary day by day,

In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's
eye,

Who first had found and loved her in a
state

Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour ; and the Queen
herself,

Grateful to Prince Geraint for service
done,

Loved her, and often with her own white
hands

Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.

And Enid loved the Queen, and with true
heart

Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.

And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced
Geraint.

But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet
was heard

The world's loud whisper breaking into
storm,

Not less Geraint believed it ; and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature : wherefore going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his principedom
lay

Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff
knights,

Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law :
And therefore, till the King himself
should please

To cleanse this common sewer of all his
realm,

He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches ; and the
King

Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own
land ;

Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his principedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all
gone.

And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gather'd from the people's
eyes :

This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless
love,

Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the
more :

And day by days she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy ;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was
the more

Suspicious that her nature had a taint,

At last, it chanced that on a summer
morn

(They sleeping each by either) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the
room,

And heated the strong warrior in his
dreams ;

Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his
throat,

The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle
sloped,

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he ?

Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk

And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said :

' O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is
gone ?

I *am* the cause, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they
say.

And yet I hate that he should linger here ;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mighty hand striking
great blows

At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his
eyes,

Than that my lord thro' me should suffer
shame.

Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine
eyes,

And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy ?

O me, I fear that I am no true wife.'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her
weep

True tears upon his broad and naked
breast,

And these awoke him, and by great mis-
chance

He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
And then he thought, ' In spite of all my
care,

For all my pains, poor man, for all my
pains,

She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's
hall.'

Then tho' he loved and revered her
too much

To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right thro' his manful breast darted the
pang

That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of
bed,

And shook his drowsy squire awake and
cried,

'My charger and her palfrey;' then to her,
'I will ride forth into the wilderness;
For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fall'n so low as some would
wish.

And thou, put on thy worst and meanest
dress

And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd,
amazed,

'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey.'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the
folds,

She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her
in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the
court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day: these things he told
the King.

Then the good King gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
And when the Queen petition'd for his
leave

To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.

So with the morning all the court were
gone.

But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her
love

For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd
the wood;

There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard
instead

A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince
Geraint,

Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow
ford

Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof

There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.

Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
Sweetly and stately, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd
him:

'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later
than we!'

'Yea, noble Queen,' he answer'd, 'and
so late

That I but come like you to see the
hunt,

Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,'
she said;

'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear
the hounds:

Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listen'd for the distant
hunt,

And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth,
there rode

Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the
knight

Had vizzor up, and show'd a youthful face,

Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and
sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf ;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not
know.

'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried
the dwarf ;

'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of
him ;'

And when she put her horse toward the
knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she
return'd

Indignant to the Queen ; whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it
of him,

Who answer'd as before ; and when the
Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the
knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his
cheek.

The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it ; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him :

But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm,
refrain'd

From ev'n a word, and so returning said :

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself :
And I will track this vermin to their
earths :

For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at,
arms

On loan, or else for pledge ; and, being
found,

Then will I fight him, and will break his
pride,

And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell.'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd the
stately Queen.

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all ;
And may you light on all things that you
love,

And live to wed with her whom first you
love :

But ere you wed with any, bring your
bride,

And I, were she the daughter of a
king,

Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the
hedge,

Will clothe her for her bridals like the
sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that
he heard

The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,

A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy
glade

And valley, with fixt eye following the
three.

At last they issued from the world of
wood,

And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky,
and sank.

And thither came Geraint, and under-
neath

Beheld the long street of a little town

In a long valley, on one side whereof,

White from the mason's hand, a fortress
rose ;

And on one side a castle in decay,

Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry
ravine :

And out of town and valley came a noise

As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed

Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks.

At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the
three,

And enter'd, and were lost behind the
walls.

'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd
him to his earth.'

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot
hiss

And bustling whistle of the youth who
scour'd

His master's armour; and of such a one
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in
the town?'

Who told him, scouring still, 'The
sparrow-hawk!'

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the
hubbub here?

Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-
hawk.'

Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above
his work,

Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him,
said:

'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-
hawk

Has little time for idle questioners.'
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden
spleen:

'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-
hawk!

Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck
him dead!

Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world! What is it
to me?

O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-
hawks!

Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-
mad,

Where can I get me harbourage for the
night?

And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy?
Speak!

Whereat the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in
hand

And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger
knight;

We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work.
Arms? truth! I know not: all are
wanted here.

Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know
not, save,

It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work
again.

Then rode Geraint, a littlespleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry
ravine.

There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and
said:

'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint
replied,

'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the
night.'

Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-
door'd.'

'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied
Geraint;

'So that ye do not serve me sparrow-
hawks

For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours'
fast.'

Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed
Earl,

And answer'd, 'Graver cause than yours
is mine

To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-
hawk:

But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly
star

Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed
with fern;

And here had fall'n a great part of a
tower,

Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the
cliff,

And like a crag was gay with wilding
flowers :

And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent,
wound

Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred
arms,

And suck'd the joining of the stones, and
look'd

A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,
Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form ;
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint ;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green
and red,

And he suspends his converse with a
friend,

Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, 'There is thenightingale ;'
So fared it with Geraint, who thought
and said,

'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice
for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang
was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid
sang :

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and
lower the proud ;

Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine,
storm, and cloud ;

Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with
smile or frown ;

With that wild wheel we go not up or
down ;

Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many
lands ;

Frown and we smile, the lords of our
own hands ;

For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring
crowd ;

Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the
cloud ;

Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.'

'Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn
the nest,'

Said Yniol ; 'enter quickly.' Entering
then,

Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim bro-
cade ;

And near her, like a blossom vermeil-
white,

That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought
Geraint,

• 'Here by God's rood is the one maid for
me.'

But none spake word except the hoary
Earl :

'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in
the court ;

Take him to stall, and give him corn, and
then

Go to the town and buy us flesh and
wine ;

And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great.'

He spake : the Prince, as Enid past
him, fain

To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said,
'Forbear!

Rest! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my
son,

Endures not that her guest should serve
himself.'

And reverencing the custom of the house
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the
Prince and Earl

Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and
wine.

And Enid brought sweet cakes to make
them cheer,

And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also
serve

For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread
the board,

And stood behind, and waited on the
three.

And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it
down:

But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his
veins,

Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky
hall;

Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:

'Fair Host and Earl, I pray your
courtesy;

This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me
of him.

His name? but no, good faith, I will not
have it:

For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have

I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am
Geraint,

Of Devon—for this morning when the
Queen

Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she re-
turn'd

Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have
it of him.

And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to
find

Arms in your town, where all the men
are mad;

They take the rustic murmur of their
bourg

For the great wave that echoes round the
world;

They would not hear me speak: but if
ye know

Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have
sworn

That I will break his pride and learn his
name,

Avenging this great insult done the
Queen.'

Then cried Earl Yniol, 'Art thou he
indeed,

Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your
state

And presence might have guess'd you one
of those

That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me
praise

Your feats of arms, and often when I
paused

Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
O never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
 Drunk even when he woo'd ; and be he dead
 I know not, but he past to the wild land.
 The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
 My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
 Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
 When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
 Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ;
 And since the proud man often is the mean,
 He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
 Affirming that his father left him gold,
 And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ;
 Bribed with large promises the men who served
 About my person, the more easily
 Because my means were somewhat broken into
 Thro' open doors and hospitality ;
 Raised my own town against me in the night
 Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ;
 From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;
 Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
 For truly there are those who love me yet ;
 And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
 Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
 But that his pride too much despises me :
 And I myself sometimes despise myself ;
 For I have let men be, and have their way ;
 Am much too gentle, have not used my power :
 Nor know I whether I be very base
 Or very manful, whether very wise
 Or very foolish ; only this I know,
 That whatsoever evil happen to me,
 I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
 But can endure it all most patiently.'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint,
 'but arms,
 That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew,
 fight
 In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answer'd, 'Arms, indeed,
 but old
 And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
 Are mine, and therefore at thine asking,
 thine.
 But in this tournament can no man tilt,
 Except the lady he loves best be there.
 Two forks are fixt into the meadow
 ground,
 And over these is placed a silver wand,
 And over that a golden sparrow-hawk,
 The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
 And this, what knight soever be in field
 Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
 And tilts with my good nephew there-
 upon,
 Who being apt at arms and big of bone
 Has ever won it for the lady with him,
 And toppling over all antagonism
 Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-
 hawk.
 But thou, that hast no lady, canst not
 fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright
 replied,
 Leaning a little toward him, 'Thy leave !
 Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
 For this dear child, because I never saw,
 Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
 Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
 And if I fall her name will yet remain
 Untarnish'd as before ; but if I live,
 So aid me Heaven when at mine utter-
 most,
 As I will make her truly my true wife.'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
 Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
 And looking round he saw not Enid there,
 (Who hearing her own name had stol'n
 away)
 But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
 And fondling all her hand in his he said,

'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the
Prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and
she
With frequent smile and nod departing
found,

Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl ;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek,
and then

On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart : but never light and
shade

Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and
pale

Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle
breast ;

Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it ;
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness ;
And when the pale and bloodless east
began

To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they
moved

Down to the meadow where the jousts
were held,

And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when
Geraint

Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could
move

The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro'
these

Princelike his bearing shone ; and errant
knights

And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the
ground,

And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet
blown,

Spake to the lady with him and pro-
claim'd,

'Advance and take, as fairest of the fair,
What I these two years past have won
for thee,

The prize of beauty.' Loudly spake the
Prince,

'Forbear : there is a worthier,' and the
knight

With some surprise and thrice as much
disdain

Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his
face

Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at
Yule,

So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
'Do battle for it then,' no more ; and
thrice

They clash'd together, and thrice they
brake their spears.

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd
at each

So often and with such blows, that all the
crowd

Wonder'd, and now and then from distant
walls

There came a clapping as of phantom
hands.

So twice they fought, and twice they
breathed, and still

The dew of their great labour, and the
blood

Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd
their force.

But either's force was match'd till Yniol's
cry,

'Remember that great insult done the
Queen,'

Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade
aloft,

And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the
bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his
breast,
And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the
fallen man
Made answer, groaning, 'Edyrn, son of
Nudd !
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken : men have seen my
fall.'
'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' replied
Geraint,
'These two things shalt thou do, or else
thou diest.
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with
dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming
there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the
Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it ; next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy
kin.
These two things shalt thou do, or thou
shalt die.'
And Edyrn answer'd, 'These things will
I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my
pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall !'
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And being young, he changed and came
to loathe
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at
last
In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the
hunting-morn
Made a low splendour in the world, and
wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise
given

No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her, till her promise
given—
To ride with him this morning to the
court,
And there be made known to the stately
Queen,
And there be wedded with all ceremony.
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so
mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the
dress
She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint.
And still she look'd, and still the terror
grew
Of that strange bright and dreadful thing,
a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk :
And softly to her own sweet heart she said :

'This noble prince who won our
earldom back,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit
him !
Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favour at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim, and finger
lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him.'

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a
costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the
night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd
their house,
And scatter'd all they had to all the winds :
For while the mother show'd it, and the
two

Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they
fled

With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought
them bread :

And Edyrn's men had caught them in
their flight,

And placed them in this ruin ; and she
wish'd

The Prince had found her in her ancient
home ;

Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she
knew ;

And last bethought her how she used to
watch,

Near that old home, a pool of golden carp ;
And one was patch'd and blurr'd and
lustreless

Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool ;
And half asleep she made comparison

Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again ;

And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool ;

But this was in the garden of a king ;
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she
knew

That all was bright ; that all about were
birds

Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work ;
That all the turf was rich in plots that

look'd

Each like a garnet or a turkis in it ;
And lords and ladies of the high court

went

In silver tissue talking things of state ;
And children of the King in cloth of

gold

Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down
the walks ;

And while she thought 'They will not
see me,' came

A stately queen whose name was
Guinevere,

And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at

all

Let them be gold ; and charge the
gardeners now

To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die.'

And therewithal one came and seized on
her,

And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,

And lo ! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake ; and in her hand

A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly :

'See here, my child, how fresh the
colours look,

How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the
wave.

Why not ? It never yet was worn, I trow :
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know
it.'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at
first,

Could scarce divide it from her foolish
dream :

Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it ; your

good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night ;

Your own good gift !' 'Yea, surely,' said
the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,

Went Yniol thro' the town, and every-
where

He found the sack and plunder of our
house

All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town ;
And gave command that all which once

was ours

Should now be ours again : and yester-eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with your

Prince,

Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,

Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.

Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise ?

For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have
yours,

And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and
seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound,
and all

That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune swerved from sun to
shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has
come;

So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the
Prince

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the
hedge,

And like a madman brought her to the
court,

Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might
shame the Prince

To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they
sought

Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her
match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of
breath;

And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of
morn

Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed
herself,

Help'd by the mother's careful hand and
eye,

Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round,
and said,

She never yet had seen her half so fair;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of
flowers,

And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar
first

Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him
with joy.

And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and
wild;

But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the
gay.'

But while the women thus rejoiced,
Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and
call'd

For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd: 'Earl, entreat her by my
love,

Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk,'
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's
face,

But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd
gift,

And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended. Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus
attired;

And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,

But rested with her sweet face satisfied ;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly
said,

'O my new mother, be not wroth or
grieved

At thy new son, for my petition to her.
When late I left Caerleon, our great
Queen,

In words whose echo lasts, they were so
sweet,

Made promise, that whatever bride I
brought,

Herself would clothe her like the sun in
Heaven.

Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hall,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,

I vow'd that could I gain her, our fair
Queen,

No hand but hers, should make your Enid
burst

Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought
perhaps,

That service done so graciously would
bind

The two together ; fain I would the two
Should love each other : how can Enid
find

A nobler friend ? Another thought was
mine ;

I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists

Might well have served for proof that I
was loved,

I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,
Or easy nature, might not let itself

Be moulded by your wishes for her weal ;
Or whether some false sense in her own

self

Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall ;

And such a sense might make her long
for court

And all its perilous glories : and I
thought,

That could I someway prove such force
in her

Link'd with such love for me, that at a
word

(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer ; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage ; then I felt

That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and
flows,

Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do
rest,

A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross

Between us. Grant me pardon for my
thoughts :

And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,

When your fair child shall wear your
costly gift

Beside your own warm hearth, with, on
her knees,

Who knows ? another gift of the high
God,

Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp
you thanks.'

He spoke : the mother smiled, but half
in tears,

Then brought a mantle down and wrapt
her in it,

And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode
away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had
climb'd

The giant tower, from whose high crest,
they say,

Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea ;

But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale

of Usk,

By the flat meadow, till she saw them
come ;

And then descending met them at the
gates,

Embraced her with all welcome as a
friend,

And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the

sun ;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay.

For by the hands of Dubric, the high
saint,
They twain were wedded with all cere-
mony.

And this was on the last year's Whit-
suntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved
her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the
court.

And now this morning when he said
to her,
'Put on your worst and meanest dress,'
she found
And took it, and array'd herself therein.

GERAINT AND ENID.

O PURBLIND race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and
reach

That other, where we see as we are seen !

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing
forth

That morning, when they both had got
to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his
heart,

Which, if he spoke at all, would break
perforce

Upon a head so dear in thunder, said :
'Not at my side. I charge thee ride
before,

Ever a good way on before ; and this
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word !' and Enid was aghast ;
And forth they rode, but scarce three
paces on,

When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron ;' he loosed a mighty
purse,

Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward
the squire.

So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing,
strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the
squire

Chafing his shoulder : then he cried again,
'To the wilds !' and Enid leading down
the tracks

Thro' which he bad her lead him on,
they past

The marches, and by bandit-haunted
holds,

Gray swamps and pools, waste places of
the hern,

And wildernesses, perilous paths, they
rode :

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd
soon :

A stranger meeting them had surely
thought

They rode so slowly and they look'd so
pale,

That each had suffer'd some exceeding
wrong.

For he was ever saying to himself,
'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her
true'—

And there he broke the sentence in his
heart

Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters
him.

And she was ever praying the sweet
heavens

To save her dear lord whole from any
wound.

And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so
cold ;

Till the great plover's human whistle
amazed

Her heart, and glancing round the waste
she fear'd

In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
Then thought again, 'If there be such in
me,

I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day
was gone,

Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a
rock

In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow,
'Look,

Here comes a laggard hanging down his
head,

Who seems no bolder than a beaten
hound;

Come, we will slay him and will have his
horse

And armour, and his damsel shall be
ours.'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and
said:

'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or
shame.'

Then she went back some paces of
return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said;
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the
rock

Waiting to fall on you, and heard them
boast

That they would slay you, and possess
your horse

And armour, and your damsel should be
theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer: 'Did I
wish

Your warning or your silence? one com-
mand

I laid upon you, not to speak to me,

And thus ye keep it! Well then, look
—for now,

Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit
three.

And at the midmost charging, Prince
Geraint

Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his
breast

And out beyond; and then against his
brace

Of comrades, each of whom had broken
on him

A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd
the twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying
him,

Stript from the three dead wolves of
woman born

The three gay suits of armour which they
wore,

And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them
on

Before you;' and she drove them thro'
the waste.

He follow'd nearer: ruth began to
work

Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience

Driving them on: he fain had spoken to
her,

And loosed in words of sudden fire the
wrath

And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all
within;

But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her
dead,

Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own
bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty :
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth
the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear
had heard
Call herself false : and suffering thus he
made
Minutes an age : but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly
arm'd,
Whereof, one seem'd far larger than her
lord,
And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a
prize !
Three horses and three goodly suits of
arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on.'
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a
knight.'
The third, 'A craven ; how he hangs his
head.'
The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon
him.'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and
said,
'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good ;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me
for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming, and said to
him
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to
speak ?'
He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she
spoke.

'There lurk three villains yonder in the
wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye
pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer
back :
'And if there were an hundred in the
wood,
And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only
breathe
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a
breath.
And he, she dreaded most, bare down
upon him.
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd ; but
Geraint's,
A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corselet
home,
And then brake short, and down his
enemy roll'd,
And there lay still ; as he that tells the
tale
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls
to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling
grew :
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades making slower at the
Prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen,
stood ;
On whom the victor, to confound them
more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry ; for as
one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-
brook,

All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to
hear

His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair
who turn'd

Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an
innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd
the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from
those dead wolves

Their three gay suits of armour, each from
each,

And bound them on their horses, each on
each,

And tied the bridie-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the
wood.

He follow'd nearer still: the pain she
had

To keep them in the wild ways of the
wood,

Two sets of three laden with jingling
arms,

Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her
heart:

And they themselves, like creatures gently
born

But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light
ears, and felt

Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood
they past,

And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike
chased

In the brown wild, and mowers mowing
in it:

And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in
his hand

Bare victual for the mowers: and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale:
Then, moving downward to the meadow
ground,

He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by
him, said,

'Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so
faint.'

'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth; 'and
thou,

My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers;' then set
down

His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate them-
selves.

And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure; but
Geraint

Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
And when he found all empty, was
amazed;

And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all,
but take

A horse and arms for guerdon; choose
the best.'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the
Prince.

'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
'Not guerdon; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return,
and fetch

Fresh victual for these mowers of our
Earl;

For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his; and I will tell
him

How great a man thou art: he loves to
know

When men of mark are in his territory:
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowers'
fare.'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better
fare:

I never ate with angrier appetite

Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no Earl's palace will I go.
I know, God knows, too much of
palaces !

And if he want me, let him come to me.
But hire us some fair chamber for the
night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us
know.'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad
youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself
a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left
alone.

But when the Prince had brought his
errant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let
them glance
At Enid, where she droopt : his own
false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he
sigh'd ;
Then with another humorous ruth re-
mark'd

The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning
scythe,

And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the
grass

There growing longest by the meadow's
edge,

And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage
ring,

Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they
went ;

Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,
Call for the woman of the house,' to which
She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord ;' the
two remain'd

Apart by all the chamber's width, and
mute

As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of
birth ;

Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor
glance

The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the
street,

And heel against the pavement echoing,
burst

Their drowse ; and either started while
the door,

Push'd from without, drave backward to
the wall,

And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place,
Limours.

He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt
hand,

Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly
cheer

To feed the sudden guest, and sump-
tuously

According to his fashion, bad the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,
And feast with these in honour of their
Earl ;

'And care not for the cost ; the cost is
mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and
Earl Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd
upon it,

And made it of two colours ; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled
him,

Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets ; thus he moved the Prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.

Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd
Limours,

'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room,
and speak

To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,'
he said;

'Get her to speak: she doth not speak to
me.'

Then rose Limours, and looking at his
feet,

Like him who tries the bridge he fears
may fail,

Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisper-
ingly:

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me
wild—

What chance is this? how is it I see you
here?

Ye are in my power at last, are in my
power.

Yet fear me not: I call mine own self
wild,

But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
I thought, but that your father came
between,

In former days you saw me favourably.

And if it were so do not keep it back:

Make me a little happier: let me know it:

Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?

Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you
are.

And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,

Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,

You come with no attendance, page or
maid,

To serve you—doth he love you as of old?

For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know

Tho' men may bicker with the things they
love,

They would not make them laughable in
all eyes,

Not while they loved them; and your
wretched dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks

Your story, that this man loves you no
more.

Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
A common chance—right well I know it
—pall'd—

For I know men: nor will ye win him
back,

For the man's love once gone never
returns.

But here is one who loves you as of old;
With more exceeding passion than of old:
Good, speak the word: my followers ring
him round:

He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
They understand: nay; I do not mean
blood:

Nor need ye look so scared at what I say:
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall: there is the
keep;

He shall not cross us more; speak but
the word:

Or speak it not; but then by Him that
made me

The one true lover whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from thee, moves me
yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own
voice

And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist; but Enid fear'd his
eyes,

Moist as they were, wine-heated from the
feast;

And answer'd with such craft as women
use,

Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and
said:

'Earl, if you love me as in former
years,

And do not practise on me, come with
morn,

And snatch me from him as by violence;
Leave me to-night: I am weary to the
death.'

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd
plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-
amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bad him a loud
good-night.
He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while
she held

He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly
pleased

To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly,
heap'd

The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need ;
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and
then

Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs
awoke ;

Then thought she heard the wild Earl at
the door,

With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning
her ;

Which was the red cock shouting to the
light,

As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy
world,

And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares : jangling, the
casque

Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence
given,

She told him all that Earl Limours had
said,

Except the passage that he loved her not ;

Nor left untold the craft herself had used ;
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and
seem'd

So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought 'was it for him she
wept

In Devon ?' he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good
fellows fools

And traitors. Call the host and bid him
bring

Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the
house,

And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and
return'd :

Then tending her rough lord, tho' all
unask'd,

In silence, did him service as a squire ;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and
cried,

'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he
learnt it, 'Take

Five horses and their armours ;' and the
host

Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,

'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth
of one !'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the
Prince,

And then to Enid, 'Forward ! and to-
day

I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
To charge you) that ye speak not but
obey.'

And Enid answer'd, 'Yea, my lord,
I know

Your wish, and would obey ; but riding
first,

I hear the violent threats you do not
hear,

I see the danger which you cannot see :
Then not to give you warning, that seems
hard ;

Almost beyond me : yet I would obey.'

‘Yea so,’ said he, ‘do it : be not too wise ;

Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and
yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.’

With that he turn’d and look’d as
keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver’s toil ;
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judger would have call’d her
guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look’d and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten
broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call’d
the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look’d back, and when she saw
him ride
More near by many a rood than yester-
morn,
It wellnigh made her cheerful ; till
Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should
say
‘Ye watch me,’ sadden’d all her heart
again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping
hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she
saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then not to disobey her lord’s behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning,
stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,

Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-
cloud
Whose skirts are loosen’d by the breaking
storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash’d on Geraint, who closed with him,
and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm
beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn’d or
dead,
And overthrew the next that follow’d him,
And blindly rush’d on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish’d panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o’er their shadows on the
sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower ;
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way ;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled
Geraint,
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. ‘Horse and man,’
he said,
‘All of one mind and all right-honest
friends !
Not a hoof left : and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with
arms ;
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg :
And so what say ye, shall we strip him
there
Your lover ? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armour ? shall we fast, or
dine ?
No ?—then do thou, being right honest,
pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl
Doorm,

I too would still be honest.' Thus he said :

And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death ;

Sofared it with Geraint, who being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet
wagg'd ;

And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his
horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his
arms,

Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering
sun,

And swathed the hurt that drain'd her
dear lord's life.

Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower:
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him :
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl ;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse
song,

He drove the dust against her veiless eyes :
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made

The long way smoke beneath him in his
fear ;

At which her palfrey whinnying lifted
heel,

And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved
like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl
Doorm,
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet
beard,

Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up ;
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, ' What, is he
dead ?'

' No, no, not dead !' she answer'd in all
haste.

' Would some of your kind people take
him up,

And bear him hence out of this cruel sun ?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm : ' Well, if he
be not dead,

Why wail ye for him thus ? ye seem a child.
And be he dead, I count you for a fool ;
Your wailing will not quicken him : dead
or not,

Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.
Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our
hall :

An if he live, we will have him of our
band ;

And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one.'

He spake, and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who
advanced,

Each growling like a dog, when his good
bone

Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling : so the ruffians
growl'd,

Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,

Their chance of booty from the morning's
raid,

Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded ; laid
him on it

All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,
(His gentle charger following him unled)
And cast him and the bier in which he
lay

Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as
before,

And cursing their lost time, and the dead
man,

And their own Earl, and their own souls,
and her.

They might as well have blest her : she
was deaf

To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his
head,

And chafing his pale hands, and calling
to him.

Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping
his head,

And chafing his faint hands, and calling
to him ;

And felt the warm tears falling on his face ;
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me :'

And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as
dead,

That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me.'

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to
the hall.

His lusty spearmen follow'd him with
noise :

Each hurling down a heap of things that
rang

Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,

And doff'd his helm : and then there
flutter'd in,

Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen : and
Earl Doorm

Struck with a knife's haft hard against
the board,

And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his
spears.

And men brought in whole hogs and
quarter beeves,

And all the hall was dim with steam of
flesh :

And none spake word, but all sat down
at once,

And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them
feed ;

Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he
would,

He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and
found

A damsel drooping in a corner of it.

Then he remember'd her, and how she
wept ;

And out of her there came a power upon
him ;

And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat !
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.

God's curse, it makes me mad to see you
weep.

Eat ! Look yourself. Good luck had
your good man,

For were I dead who is it would weep
for me ?

Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.

And so there lived some colour in your
cheek,

There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.

But listen to me, and by me be ruled,

And I will do the thing I have not done,
For ye shall share my earldom with me,

girl,

And we will live like two birds in one
nest,

And I will fetch you forage from all
fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke : the brawny spearman let
his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and
turning stared ;
While some, whose souls the old serpent
long had drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd
leaf

And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's
ear

What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious
things,

But now desired the humbling of their
best,

Yea, would have help'd him to it : and
all at once

They hated her, who took no thought of
them,

But answer'd in low voice, her meek head
yet

Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesies,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her
speak,

But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graci-
ously,

Assumed that she had thank'd him, add-
ing, 'Yea,

Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I
be glad

Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her
talk,

As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing ; suddenly seized on
her,

And bare her by main violence to the
board,

And thrust the dish before her, crying,
'Eat.'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not
eat

Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he
answer'd. 'Here !'

(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it
to her,)

'Lo ! I, myself, when flush'd with fight,
or hot,

God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can
eat :

Drink therefore and the wine will change
your will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I
will not drink

Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me ; and if he rise no
more,

I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his
hall,

Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper
lip,

And coming up close to her, said at last :
'Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning : yonder man is surely
dead ;

And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink ? And wherefore wail
for one,

Who put your beauty to this flout and
scorn

By dressing it in rags ? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus : cross me no
more.

At least put off to please me this poor
gown,

This silken rag, this beggar-woman's
weed :

I love that beauty should go beautifully :
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beauti-
fully ?

Rise therefore ; robe yourself in this :
'obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentle-
women

Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the
front

With jewels than the sward with drops of
dew,

When all night long a cloud clings to the
hill,

And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung: so thickly shone
the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come; and Enid
said:

'In this poor gown my dear lord found
me first,

And loved me serving in my father's hall:
In this poor gown I rode with him to
court,

And there the Queen array'd me like the
sun:

In this poor gown he bad me clothe
myself,

When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be
gain'd:

And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough:
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be:
I never loved, can never love but him:
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

Then strode the brute Earl up and
down his hall,

And took his russet beard between his
teeth;

Last, coming up quite close, and in his
mood

Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with
you;

Take my salute,' unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, 'He had not
dared to do it,

Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the
wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at
his sword,

(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a
sweep of it

Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a
ball

The russet-bearded head roll'd on the
floor.

So died Earl Doorm by him he counted
dead.

And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise,
and fled

Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said:

'Enid, I have used you worse than
that dead man;

Done you more wrong: we both have
undergone

That trouble which has left me thrice
your own:

Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you
yesternorn—

You thought me sleeping, but I heard
you say,

I heard you say, that you were no true
wife:

I swear I will not ask your meaning in
it:

I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than
doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender
word,

She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart:
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will
return

And slay you ; fly, your charger is with-
out,
My palfrey lost.' 'Then, Enid, shall you
ride

Behind me.' 'Yea,' said Enid, 'let us go.'
And moving out they found the stately
horse,

Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came,
and stoop'd

With a low whinny toward the pair : and
she

Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also ; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his
foot

She set her own and climb'd ; he turn'd
his face

And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast
her arms

About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous
hour

Put hand to hand beneath her husband's
heart,

And felt him hers again : she did not
weep,

But o'er her meek eyes came a happy
mist

Like that which kept the heart of Eden
green

Before the useful trouble of the rain :

Yet not so misty were her meek blue
eyes

As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his
lance

In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of
blood,

She, with her mind all full of what had
chanced,

Shriek'd to the stranger 'Slay not a dead
man !'

'The voice of Enid,' said the knight ;
but she,

Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and
shriek'd again,

'O cousin, slay not him who gave you
life.'

And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake :
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all
love ;

I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm ;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon
him,

Who love you, Prince, with something
of the love

Wherewith we love the Heaven that
chastens us.

For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to
Hell,

By overthrowing me you threw me higher.

Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table
Round,

And since I knew this Earl, when I my-
self

Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to
Doorm

(The King is close behind me) bidding
him

Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the
King.'

'He hears the judgment of the King
of kings,'

Cried the wan Prince ; 'and lo, the
powers of Doorm

Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound
and knoll,

Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled ; and then he plainlier
told

How the huge Earl lay slain within his
hall.

But when the knight besought him,
'Follow me,

Prince, to the camp, and in the King's
own ear

Speak what has chanced ; ye surely have
endured
Strange chances here alone ;' that other
flush'd,

And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless
King,

And after madness acted question ask'd :
Till Edyrn crying, ' If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'
' Enough,' he said, ' I follow,' and they
went.

But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and
then,

When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
From which old fires have broken, men
may fear

Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said :

' Fair and dear cousin, you that most
had cause
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to
make

My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame ; being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and
wrought

Until I overturn'd him ; then set up
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour ;
Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad :
And, but for my main purpose in these
jousts,

I should have slain your father, seized
yourself.

I lived in hope that sometime you would
come

To these my lists with him whom best
you loved ;

And there, poor cousin, with your meek
blue eyes,

The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him.

Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd
to me,

I should not less have kill'd him. And
you came,—

But once you came,—and with your own
true eyes

Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three
years old,

And set his foot upon me, and give me
life.

There was I broken down ; there was I
saved :

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating
the life

He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon
me

Was but to rest awhile within her court ;
Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known,
I found,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's in-
deed :

And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high
saint,

Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,
Which, when it weds with manhood,
makes a man.

And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw ;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed ;
And fear not, cousin ; I am changed
indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or
foe,

There most in those who most have don'
them ill.

And when they reach'd the camp the
 King himself
 Advanced to greet them, and beholding
 her
 Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a
 word,
 But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
 In converse for a little, and return'd,
 And, gravely smiling, lifted her from
 horse,
 And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-
 like,
 And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
 And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
 Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and
 said :

' Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for
 my leave
 To move to your own land, and there
 defend
 Your marches, I was prick'd with some
 reproof,
 As one that let foul wrong stagnate and
 be,
 By having look'd too much thro' alien
 eyes,
 And wrought too long with delegated
 hands,
 Not used mine own : but now behold me
 come
 To cleanse this common sewer of all my
 realm,
 With Edyrn and with others : have ye
 look'd
 At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly
 changed?
 This work of his is great and wonderful.
 His very face with change of heart is
 changed.
 The world will not believe a man repents :
 And this wise world of ours is mainly
 right.
 Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious
 quitch
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
 And make all clean, and plant himself
 afresh.
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart

As I will weed this land before I go.
 I, therefore, made him of our Table
 Round,
 Not rashly, but have proved him every-
 way
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,
 Sanest and most obedient : and indeed
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
 After a life of violence, seems to me
 A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his
 life,
 My subject with my subjects under him,
 Should make an onslaught single on a
 realm
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
 And were himself nigh wounded to the
 death.'

So spake the King ; low bow'd the
 Prince, and felt
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,
 And past to Enid's tent ; and thither came
 The King's own leech to look into his
 hurt ;
 And Enid tended on him there ; and there
 Her constant motion round him, and the
 breath
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,
 As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
 Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his
 hurt,
 The blameless King went forth and cast
 his eyes
 On each of all whom Uther left in charge
 Long since, to guard the justice of the
 King :
 He look'd and found them wanting ; and
 as now
 Men weed the white horse on the Berk-
 shire hills
 To keep him bright and clean as hereto-
 fore,
 He rooted out the slothful officer
 Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at
 wrong,

And in their chairs set up a stronger race
 With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
 To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
 Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
 And broke the bandit holds and cleansed
 the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again,
 they past
 With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
 There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
 And clothed her in apparel like the day.
 And tho' Geraint could never take again
 That comfort from their converse which
 he took

Before the Queen's fair name was breathed
 upon,
 He rested well content that all was well.
 Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
 And fifty knights rode with them to the
 shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own
 land.

And there he kept the justice of the King
 So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
 Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died :
 And being ever foremost in the chase,
 And victor at the tilt and tournament,
 They call'd him the great Prince and man
 of men.

But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
 Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
 Enid the Good ; and in their halls arose
 The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
 Of times to be ; nor did he doubt her more,
 But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd
 A happy life with a fair death, and fell
 Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
 In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

BALIN AND BALAN.

PELLAM the King, who held and lost with
 Lot

In that first war, and had his realm restored
 But render'd tributary, fail'd of late
 To send his tribute ; wherefore Arthur
 call'd

T

His treasurer, one of many years, and
 spake,
 ' Go thou with him and him and bring it
 to us,
 Lest we should set one truer on his throne.
 Man's word is God in man.'

His Baron said
 ' We go but harken : there be two strange
 knights
 Who sit near Camelot at a fountain-side,
 A mile beneath the forest, challenging
 And overthrowing every knight who
 comes.
 Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,
 And send them to thee?'

Arthur laugh'd upon him.
 ' Old friend, too old to be so young,
 depart,
 Delay not thou for ought, but let them
 sit,
 Until they find a lustier than themselves.'

So these departed. Early, one fair
 dawn,
 The light-wing'd spirit of his youth
 return'd
 On Arthur's heart ; he arm'd himself and
 went,
 So coming to the fountain-side beheld
 Balin and Balan sitting statuelike,
 Brethren, to right and left the spring, that
 down,
 From underneath a plume of lady-fern,
 Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom
 of it.

And on the right of Balin Balin's horse
 Was fast beside an alder, on the left
 Of Balan Balan's near a poplartree.
 ' Fair Sirs,' said Arthur, ' wherefore sit
 ye here?'

Balin and Balan answer'd ' For the sake
 Of glory ; we be mightier men than all
 In Arthur's court ; that also have we
 proved ;

For whatsoever knight against us came
 Or I or he have easily overthrown.'
 ' I too,' said Arthur, ' am of Arthur's
 hall,

2 B

But rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts ; but see, or proven
or not,
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow.'
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren
down,
And lightly so return'd, and no man knew.

Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside
The carolling water set themselves again,
And spake no word until the shadow
turn'd ;

When from the fringe of coppice round
them burst

A spangled pursuivant, and crying 'Sirs,
Rise, follow ! ye be sent for by the
King,'

They follow'd ; whom when Arthur seeing
ask'd

'Tell me your names ; why sat ye by the
well ?'

Balin the stillness of a minute broke
Saying 'An unmelodious name to thee,
Balin, "the Savage"—that addition
thine—

My brother and my better, this man here,
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull
A thrall of thine in open hall, my hand
Was gauntleted, half slew him ; for I
heard

He had spoken evil of me ; thy just wrath
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine
eyes.

I have not lived my life delightfully :
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,
Had often wrought some fury on myself,
Saving for Balan : those three kingless
years

Have past—were wormwood-bitter to me.
King,

Methought that if we sat beside the well,
And hurl'd to ground what knight soever
spurr'd

Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier
back,

And make, as ten-times worthier to be
thine

Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I
have said.

Not so—not all. A man of thine to-day

Abash'd us both, and brake my boast.
Thy will ?'

Said Arthur 'Thou hast everspoken truth ;
Thy too fierce manhood would not let
thee lie.

Rise, my true knight. As children learn,
be thou

Wiser for falling ! walk with me, and
move

To music with thine Order and the King.
Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren,
stands

Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again !'

Thereafter, when Sir Balin enter'd hall,
The Lost one Found was greeted as in
Heaven

With joy that blazed itself in woodland
wealth

Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board ;
they sat,

And cup clash'd cup ; they drank and
some one sang,

Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, where-
upon

Their common shout in chorus, mount-
ing, made

Those banners of twelve battles overhead
Stir, as they stir'd of old, when Arthur's
host

Proclaim'd him Victor, and the day was
won.

Then Balan added to their Order lived
A wealthier life than heretofore with these
And Balin, till their embassy return'd.

'Sir King' they brought report 'we
hardly found,

So bush'd about it is with gloom, the hall
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once
A Christless foe of thine as ever dash'd
Horse against horse ; but seeing that thy
realm

Hath prosper'd in the name of Christ, the
King

Took, as in rival heat, to holy things ;
And finds himself descended from the
Saint

Arimathæan Joseph ; him who first
 Brought the great faith to Britain over
 seas ;
 He boasts his life as purer than thine
 own ;
 Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat ;
 Hath push'd aside his faithful wife, nor
 lets

Or dame or damsel enter at his gates
 Lest he should be polluted. This gray
 King
 Show'd us a shrine wherein were wonders
 —yea—

Rich arks with priceless bones of martyr-
 dom,

Thorns of the crown and shivers of the
 cross,

And therewithal (for thus he told us)
 brought

By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
 Wherewith the Roman pierced the side
 of Christ.

He much amazed us ; after, when we
 sought

The tribute, answer'd " I have quite fore-
 gone

All matters of this world : Garlon, mine
 heir,

Of him demand it," which this Garlon gave
 With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

But when we left, in those deep woods
 we found

A knight of thine spear-stricken from
 behind,

Dead, whom we buried ; more than one
 of us

Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman
 there

Reported of some demon in the woods
 Was once a man, who driven by evil
 tongues

From all his fellows, lived alone, and came
 To learn black magic, and to hate his
 kind

With such a hate, that when he died, his
 soul

Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life
 Was wounded by blind tongues he saw
 not whence,

Strikes from behind. This woodman
 show'd the cave
 From which he sallies, and wherein he
 dwelt.

We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no
 more.'

Then Arthur, 'Let who goes before
 me, see

He do not fall behind me : foully slain
 And villainously ! who will hunt for me
 This demon of the woods ?' Said Balan,
 'I !

So claim'd the quest and rode away, but
 first,

Embracing Balin, 'Good my brother,
 hear !

Let not thy moods prevail, when I am
 gone

Who used to lay them ! hold them outer
 fiends,

Who leap at thee to tear thee ; shake
 them aside,

Dreams ruling when wit sleeps ! yea, but
 to dream

That any of these would wrong thee,
 wrongs thyself.

Witness their flowery welcome. Bound
 are they

To speak no evil. Truly save for fears,
 My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship
 Would make me wholly blest : thou one
 of them,

Be one indeed : consider them, and all
 Their bearing in their common bond of
 love,

No more of hatred than in Heaven itself,
 No more of jealousy than in Paradise.'

So Balan warn'd, and went ; Balin
 remain'd :

Who—for but three brief moons had
 glanced away

From being knighted till he smote the
 thrall,

And faded from the presence into years
 Of exile—now would strictlier set himself
 To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,
 Manhood, and knighthood ; wherefore
 hover'd round

Lancelot, but when he mark'd his high
 sweet smile
 In passing, and a transitory word
 Make knight or churl or child or damsel
 seem
 From being smiled at happier in them-
 selves—
 Sigh'd, as a boy lame-born beneath a
 height,
 That glooms his valley, sighs to see the
 peak
 Sun-flush'd, or touch at night the
 northern star;
 For one from out his village lately
 climb'd
 And brought report of azure lands and
 fair,
 Far seen to left and right; and he him-
 self
 Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred
 feet
 Up from the base: so Balin marvelling
 oft
 How far beyond him Lancelot seem'd to
 move,
 Groan'd, and at times would mutter,
 'These be gifts,
 Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,
 Beyond *my* reach. Well had I foughten
 —well—
 In those fierce wars, struck hard—and
 had I crown'd
 With my slain self the heaps of whom I
 slew—
 So—better!—But this worship of the
 Queen,
 That honour too wherein she holds him
 —this,
 This was the sunshine that hath given the
 man
 A growth, a name that branches o'er the
 rest,
 And strength against all odds, and what
 the King
 So prizes—overprizes—gentleness.
 Her likewise would I worship an I might.
 I never can be close with her, as he
 That brought her hither. Shall I pray
 the King
 To let me bear some token of his Queen

Whereon to gaze, remembering her—
 . forget
 My heats and violences? live afresh?
 What, if the Queen disdain'd to grant it!
 nay
 Being so stately-gentle, would she make
 My darkness blackness? and with how
 sweet grace
 She greeted my return! Bold will I
 be—
 Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,
 In lieu of this rough beast upon my
 shield,
 Langued gules, and tooth'd with grinning
 savagery.'

And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought
 him, said
 'What wilt thou bear?' Balin was bold,
 and ask'd
 To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,
 Whereat she smiled and turn'd her to the
 King,
 Who answer'd 'Thou shalt put the crown
 to use.
 The crown is but the shadow of the King,
 And this a shadow's shadow, let him
 have it,
 So this will help him of his violences!'
 'No shadow' said Sir Balin 'O my
 Queen,
 But light to me! no shadow, O my King,
 But golden earnest of a gentler life!'

So Balin bare the crown, and all the
 knights
 Approved him, and the Queen, and all
 the world
 Made music, and he felt his being move
 In music with his Order, and the King.

The nightingale, full-toned in middle
 May,
 Hath ever and anon a note so thin
 It seems another voice in other groves;
 Thus, after some quick burst of sudden
 wrath,
 The music in him seem'd to change, and
 grow
 Faint and far-off.

And once he saw the thrall
 His passion half had gauntleted to death,
 That causer of his banishment and shame,
 Smile at him, as he deem'd, presump-
 tuously:
 His arm half rose to strike again, but
 fell:
 The memory of that cognizance on shield
 Weighted it down, but in himself he
 moan'd:

'Too high this mount of Camelot for
 me:
 These high-set courtesies are not for me.
 Shall I not rather prove the worse for
 these?
 Fierier and stormier from restraining,
 break
 Into some madness ev'n before the
 Queen?'

Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain
 home,
 And glancing on the window, when the
 gloom
 Of twilight deepens round it, seems a
 flame
 That rages in the woodland far below,
 So when his moods were darken'd, court
 and King
 And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's
 hall
 Shadow'd an angry distance: yet he
 strove
 To learn the graces of their Table, fought
 Hard with himself, and seem'd at length
 in peace.

Then chanced, one morning, that Sir
 Balin sat
 Close-bower'd in that garden nigh the
 hall.
 A walk of roses ran from door to door;
 A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:
 And down that range of roses the great
 Queen
 Came with slow steps, the morning on
 her face;
 And all in shadow from the counter door
 Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,

As if he saw not, glanced aside, and
 paced
 The long white walk of lilies toward the
 bower.
 Follow'd the Queen; Sir Balin heard her
 'Prince,
 Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen,
 As pass without good morrow to thy
 Queen?'
 To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on
 earth,
 'Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen.'
 'Yea so' she said 'but so to pass me
 by—
 So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,
 Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.
 Let be: ye stand, fair lord, as in a
 dream.'

Then Lancelot with his hand among
 the flowers
 'Yea—for a dream. Last night me-
 thought I saw
 That maiden Saint who stands with lily
 in hand
 In yonder shrine. All round her prest
 the dark,
 And all the light upon her silver face
 Flow'd from the spiritual lily that she
 held.
 Lo! these her emblems drew mine eyes
 —away:
 For see, how perfect-pure! As light a
 flush
 As hardly tints the blossom of the quince
 Would mar their charm of stainless
 maidenhood.'

'Sweeter to me' she said 'this garden
 rose
 Deep-hued and many-folded! sweeter
 still
 The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom
 of May.
 Prince, we have ridd'n before among the
 flowers
 In those fair days—not all as cool as
 these,
 Tho' season-earlier. Art thou sad? or
 sick?

Our noble King will send thee his own
leech—
Sick? or for any matter anger'd at me?'

Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes;
they dwelt
Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall:
her hue
Changed at his gaze: so turning side by
side
They past, and Balin started from his
bower.

'Queen? subject? but I see not what
I see.
Damsel and lover? hear not what I
hear.
My father hath begotten me in his wrath.
I suffer from the things before me, know,
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be
knight;
A churl, a clown!' and in him gloom on
gloom
Deepen'd: he sharply caught his lance
and shield,
Nor stay'd to crave permission of the
King,
But, mad for strange adventure, dash'd
away.

He took the selfsame track as Balan,
saw
The fountain where they sat together,
sigh'd
'Was I not better there with him?' and
rode
The skyless woods, but under open blue
Came on the hoarhead woodman at a
bough
Wearily hewing. 'Churl, thine axe!'
he cried,
Descended, and disjoined it at a blow:
To whom the woodman utter'd wonder-
ingly
'Lord, thou couldst lay the Devil of
these woods
If arm of flesh could lay him.' Balin
cried
'Him, or the viler devil who plays his
part,

To lay that devil would lay the Devil in
me.'
'Nay' said the churl, 'our devil is a
truth,
I saw the flash of him but yestereven.
And some *dó* say that our Sir Garlon too
Hath learn'd black magic, and to ride
unseen.
Look to the cave.' But Balin answer'd
him
'Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl,
Look to thy woodcraft,' and so leaving
him,
Now with slack rein and careless of him-
self,
Now with dug spur and raving at him-
self,
Now with droopt brow down the long
glades he rode;
So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far
within,
The whole day died, but, dying, gleam'd
on rocks
Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from
the floor,
Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of
night
Whereout the Demon issued up from
Hell.
He mark'd not this, but blind and dear
to all
Save that chain'd rage, which ever yelpt
within,
Past eastward from the falling sun. At
once
He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud
And tremble, and then the shadow of a
spear,
Shot from behind him, ran along the
ground.
Sideways he started from the path, and
saw,
With pointed lance as if to pierce, a
shape,
A light of armour by him flash, and
pass
And vanish in the woods; and follow'd
this,
But all so blind in rage that unawares

He burst his lance against a forest bough,
Dishorsed himself, and rose again, and
fled

Far, till the castle of a King, the hall
Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, grayly draped
With streaming grass, appear'd, low-built
but strong ;

The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,
The battlement overtopt with ivytods,
A home of bats, in every tower an owl.

Then spake the men of Pellam crying
'Lord,

Why wear ye this crown-royal upon
shield?'

Said Balin 'For the fairest and the best
Of ladies living gave me this to bear.'
So stall'd his horse, and strode across the
court,

But found the greetings both of knight
and King

Faint in the low dark hall of banquet :
leaves

Laid their green faces flat against the
panes,

Sprays grated, and the canker'd boughs
without

Whined in the wood ; for all was hush'd
within,

Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise
ask'd

'Why wear ye that crown-royal?' Balin
said

'The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I,
and all,

As fairest, best and purest, granted me
To bear it !' Such a sound (for Arthur's
knights

Were hated strangers in the hall) as
makes

The white swan-mother, sitting, when she
hears

A strange knee rustle thro' her secret
reeds,

Made Garlon, hissing ; then he sourly
smiled.

'Fairest I grant her : I have seen ; but
best,

Best, purest ? *thou* from Arthur's hall,
and yet

So simple ! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see

This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret
shame ?

Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes.'

A goblet on the board by Balin, boss'd
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
Stood, all of massiest bronze : one side
had sea

And ship and sail and angels blowing on
it :

And one was rough with wattling, and
the walls

Of that low church he built at Glaston-
bury.

This Balin graspt, but while in act to
hurl,

Thro' memory of that token on the
shield

Relax'd his hold : 'I will be gentle' he
thought

'And passing gentle' caught his hand
away

Then fiercely to Sir Garlon 'Eyes have I
That saw to-day the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind me, run along the
ground ;

Eyes too that long have watch'd how
Lancelot draws

From homage to the best and purest,
might,

Name, manhood, and a grace, but scanty
thine,

Who, sitting in thine own hall, canst
endure

To mouth so huge a foulness—to thy
guest,

Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk !
Let be ! no more !'

But not the less by night
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his
rest,

Stung him in dreams. At length, and
dim thro' leaves

Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated,
and old boughs

Whined in the wood. He rose, de-
scended, met

The scorner in the castle court, and fain,
 For hate and loathing, would have past
 him by ;
 But when Sir Garlon utter'd mocking-
 wise ;
 'What, wear ye still that same crown-
 scandalous ?'
 His countenance blacken'd, and his
 forehead veins
 Bloated, and branch'd ; and tearing out
 of sheath
 The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery 'Ha !
 So thou be shadow, here I make thee
 ghost,'
 Hard upon helm smote him, and the
 blade flew
 Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the
 stones.
 Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward,
 fell,
 And Balin by the banneret of his helm
 Dragg'd him, and struck, but from the
 castle a cry
 Sounded across the court, and—men-at-
 arms,
 A score with pointed lances, making at
 him—
 He dash'd the pummel at the foremost
 face,
 Beneath a low door dipt, and made his
 feet
 Wings thro' a glimmering gallery, till he
 mark'd
 The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide
 And inward to the wall ; he stept behind ;
 Thence in a moment heard them pass
 like wolves
 Howling ; but while he stared about the
 shrine,
 In which he scarce could spy the Christ
 for Saints,
 Beheld before a golden altar lie
 The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,
 Point-painted red ; and seizing thereupon
 Push'd thro' an open casement down,
 lean'd on it,
 Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth ;
 Then hand at ear, and harkening from
 what side
 The blindfold rummage buried in the walls

Might echo, ran the counter path, and
 found
 His charger, mounted on him and away.
 An arrow whizz'd to the right, one to
 the left,
 One overhead ; and Pellam's feeble cry
 'Stay, stay him ! he defileth heavenly
 things
 With earthly uses'—made him quickly
 dive
 Beneath the boughs, and race thro' many
 a mile
 Of dense and open, till his goodly horse,
 Arising wearily at a fallen oak,
 Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to
 ground.

Half-wroth he had not ended, but all
 glad,
 Knightlike, to find his charger yet un-
 lamed,
 Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,
 Stared at the priceless cognizance, and
 thought
 'I have shamed thee so that now thou
 shamest me,
 Thee will I bear no more,' high on a
 branch
 Hung it, and turn'd aside into the woods,
 And there in gloom cast himself all
 along,
 Moaning 'My violences, my violences !'

But now the wholesome music of the
 wood
 Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of
 Mark
 A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode
 The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her
 Squire.

'The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren
 cold,
 And kindled all the plain and all the
 wold.
 The new leaf ever pushes off the old.
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

'Old priest, who mumble worship in
 your quire—

Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's
 desire,
 Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire !
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is on the dusty
 ways.

The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.
 The whole wood-world is one full peal
 of praise.

The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is lord of all things
 good,

And starve not thou this fire within thy
 blood,

But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood !

The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell !'

Then turning to her Squire 'This fire
 of Heaven,

This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
 And beat the cross to earth, and break
 the King

And all his Table.'

Then they reach'd a glade,
 Where under one long lane of cloudless
 air

Before another wood, the royal crown
 Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm
 Drew the vague glance of Vivien, and her
 Squire ;

Amazed were these ; 'Lo there' she
 cried—'a crown—

Borne by some high lord-prince of
 Arthur's hall,

And there a horse ! the rider ? where is
 he ?

See, yonder lies one dead within the
 wood.

Not dead ; he stirs !—but sleeping. I
 will speak.

Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet
 rest,

Not, doubtless, all unearn'd by noble
 deeds.

But bounden art thou, if from Arthur's
 hall,

To help the weak. Behold, I fly from
 shame,

A lustful King, who sought to win my
 love

Thro' evil ways : the knight, with whom
 I rode,

Hath suffer'd misadventure, and my
 squire

Hath in him small defence ; but thou,
 Sir Prince,

Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,
 Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid,
 To get me shelter for my maidenhood.

I charge thee by that crown upon thy
 shield,

And by the great Queen's name, arise
 and hence.'

And Balin rose, 'Thither no more !
 nor Prince

Nor knight am I, but one that hath
 defamed

The cognizance she gave me : here I
 dwell

Savage among the savage woods, here
 die—

Die : let the wolves' black maws en-
 sepulchre

Their brother beast, whose anger was his
 lord.

O me, that such a name as Guinevere's,
 Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted
 up,

And been thereby uplifted, should thro'
 me,

My violence, and my villainy, come to
 shame.'

Thereat she suddenly laugh'd and
 shrill, anon

Sigh'd all as suddenly. Said Balin to her
 'Is this thy courtesy—to mock me, ha ?

Hence, for I will not with thee.' Again
 she sigh'd

'Pardon, sweet lord ! we maidens often
 laugh

When sick at heart, when rather we
 should weep.

I knew thee wrong'd. I brake upon thy
rest,
And now full loth am I to break thy
dream,
But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
Tho' bitter. Hither, boy—and mark
me well.
Dost thou remember at Caerleon once—
A year ago—nay, then I love thee not—
Ay, thou rememberest well—one summer
dawn—
By the great tower—Caerleon upon
Usk—
Nay, truly we were hidden : this fair
lord,
The flower of all their vestal knighthood,
knelt
In amorous homage—knelt—what else ?
—O ay
Knelt, and drew down from out his
night-black hair
And mumbled that white hand whose
ring'd caress
Had wander'd from her own King's
golden head,
And lost itself in darkness, till she
cried—
I thought the great tower would crash
down on both—
“ Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on
the lips,
Thou art my King.” This lad, whose
lightest word
Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,
Saw them embrace : he reddens, cannot
speak,
So bashful, he ! but all the maiden Saints,
The deathless mother-maidenhood of
Heaven,
Cry out upon her. Up then, ride with
me !
Talk not of shame ! thou canst not, an
thou would'st,
Do these more shame than these have
done themselves.'

She lied with ease ; but horror-stricken
he,
Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,
Breathed in a dismal whisper 'It is truth.'

Sunnily she smiled 'And even in this
lone wood,
Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper
this.
Fools prate, and perish traitors. Woods
have tongues,
As walls have ears : but thou shalt go
with me,
And we will speak at first exceeding
low.
Meet is it the good King be not deceived.
See now, I set thee high on vantage
ground,
From whence to watch the time, and
eagle-like
Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the
Queen.'

She ceased ; his evil spirit upon him
leapt,
He ground his teeth together, sprang
with a yell,
Tore from the branch, and cast on earth,
the shield,
Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal
crown,
Stamp'd all into defacement, hurl'd it from
him
Among the forest weeds, and cursed the
tale,
The told-of, and the teller.

That weird yell,
Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or
beast,
Thrill'd thro' the woods ; and Balan
lurking there
(His quest was unaccomplish'd) heard
and thought
'The scream of that Wood-devil I came
to quell !'
Then nearing 'Lo ! he hath slain some
brother-knight,
And tramples on the goodly shield to
show
His loathing of our Order and the Queen.
My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil
or man
Guard thou thine head.' Sir Balin spake
not word,

But snatch'd a sudden buckler from the
Squire,
And vaulted on his horse, and so they
crash'd
In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,
Reputed to be red with sinless blood,
Redden'd at once with sinful, for the
point
Across the maiden shield of Balan prick'd
The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's
horse
Was wearied to the death, and, when
they clash'd,
Rolling back upon Balin, crush'd the man
Inward, and either fell, and swoon'd
away.

Then to her Squire mutter'd the
damsel 'Fools!
This fellow hath wrought some foulness
with his Queen:
Else never had he borne her crown, nor
raved
And thus foam'd over at a rival name:
But ihou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast
broken shell,
Art yet half-yolk, not even come to
down—
Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk—
And yet hast often pleaded for my love—
See what I see, be thou where I have
been,
Or else Sir Chick—dismount and loose
their casques
I fain would know what manner of men
they be.'
And when the Squire had loosed them,
'Goodly!—look!
They might have cropt the myriad flower
of May,
And butt each other here, like brainless
bulls,
Dead for one heifer!'

Then the gentle Squire
'I hold them happy, so they died for
love:
And, Vivien, tho' ye beat me like your
dog,
I too could die, as now I live, for thee.'

'Live on, Sir Boy,' she cried. 'I
better prize
The living dog than the dead lion: away!
I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead.'
Then leapt her palfrey o'er the fallen oak,
And bounding forward 'Leave them to
the wolves.'

But when their foreheads felt the cool-
ing air,
Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,
Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,
Crawl'd slowly with low moans to where
he lay,
And on his dying brother cast himself
Dying; and *he* lifted faint eyes; he felt
One near him; all at once they found the
world,
Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike
wail,
And drawing down the dim disastrous
brow
That o'er him hung, he kiss'd it, moan'd
and spake;

'O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died
To save thy life, have brought thee to thy
death.
Why had ye not the shield I knew? and
why
Trampled ye thus on that which bare the
Crown?'

Then Balin told him brokenly, and in
gasps,
All that had chanced, and Balan moan'd
again.

'Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's
hall:
This Garlon mock'd me, but I heeded
not.
And one said "Eat in peace! a liar is he,
And hates thee for the tribute!" this
good knight
Told me, that twice a wanton damsel
came,
And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,
Whom Pellam drove away with holy
heat.

I well believe this damsel, and the one
Who stood beside thee even now, the
same.

"She dwells among the woods" he said
"and meets

And dallies with him in the Mouth of
Hell."

Foul are their lives; foul are their lips;
they lied.

Pure as our own true Mother is our
Queen.'

'O brother' answer'd Balin 'woe is
me!

My madness all thy life has been thy
doom,

Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day;
and now

The night has come. I scarce can see
thee now.

Goodnight! for we shall never bid again
Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here,
and dark

It will be there. I see thee now no
more.

I would not mine again should darken
thine,

Goodnight, true brother.'

Balan answer'd low

'Goodnight, true brother here! good-
morrow there!

We two were born together, and we
die

Together by one doom:' and while he
spoke

Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept
the sleep

With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

A STORM was coming, but the winds
were still,

And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old
It look'd a tower of ivied masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

For he that always bare in bitter
grudge

The slights of Arthur and his Table, Mark
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering
voice,

A minstrel of Caerleon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her
name,

Sware by her—vows like theirs, that high
in heaven

Love most, but neither marry, nor are
given

In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

He ceased, and then—for Vivien
sweetly said

(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),
'And is the fair example follow'd, Sir,
In Arthur's household?'—answer'd inno-
cently:

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths
that hold

It more beseems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden girl.
They place their pride in Lancelot and
the Queen.

So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these
For Arthur bound them not to singleness
Brave hearts and clean! and yet—God
guide them—young.'

Then Mark was half in heart to hur-
his cup

Straight at the speaker, but forbore: he
rose

To leave the hall, and, Vivien following
him,

Turn'd to her: 'Here are snakes within
the grass;

And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear
The monkish manhood, and the mask of
pure

Worn by this court, can stir them till they
sting.'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scorn-
fully,

'Why fear? because that foster'd at *thy*
court

I savour of thy—virtues? fear them? no.
As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out
fear,

So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out
fear.

My father died in battle against the King,
My mother on his corpse in open field;
She bore me there, for born from death
was I

Among the dead and sown upon the
wind—

And then on thee! and shown the truth
betimes,

That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
Where Truth is hidden. Gracious lessons
thine

And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur
pure!

Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath
made

Gives him the lie! There is no being
pure,

My cherub; saith not Holy Writ the
same?"—

If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood.
Thy blessing, stainless King! I bring
thee back,

When I have ferreted out their burrow-
ings,

The hearts of all this Order in mine
hand—

Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,
Perchance, one curl of Arthur's golden
beard.

To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine
Is cleaner-fashion'd—Well, I loved thee
first,

That warps the wit.'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark.
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged
Low in the city, and on a festal day

When Guinevere was crossing the great
hall

Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen,
and wail'd.

'Why kneel ye there? What evil have
ye wrought?

Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose
And stood with folded hands and down-
ward eyes

Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,
'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an
orphan maid!

My father died in battle for thy King,
My mother on his corpse—in open field,

The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonesse—
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by

Mark the King
For that small charm of feature mine,
pursued—

If any such be mine—I fly to thee.
Save, save me thou—Woman of women—
thine

The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of
power,

Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's
own white

Earth-angel, stainless bride of stainless
King—

Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!
O yield me shelter for mine innocence
Among thy maidens!'

Here her slow sweet eyes
Fear-tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose
Fixt on her hearer's, while the Queen

who stood
All glittering like May sunshine on May
leaves

In green and gold, and plumed with green
replied,

'Peace, child! of overpraise and over-
blame

We choose the last. Our noble Arthur,
him

Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and
know.

Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—
Well, we shall test thee farther; but this
hour

We ride a-hawking with Sir Lancelot.
He hath given us a fair falcon which he
train'd;

We go to prove it. Bide ye here the
while.'

She past ; and Vivien murmur'd after
 'Go !
 I bide the while.' Then thro' the portal-
 arch
 Peering askance, and muttering broken-
 wise,
 As one that labours with an evil dream,
 Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to
 horse.

'Is that the Lancelot? goodly—ay, but
 gaunt :
 Courteous—amends for gauntness—takes
 her hand—
 That glance of theirs, but for the street,
 had been
 A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in
 hand !
 Let go at last !—they ride away—to hawk
 For waterfowl. Royaller game is mine.
 For such a supersensual sensual bond
 As that gray cricket chirpt of at our
 hearth—
 Touch flax with flame—a glance will serve
 —the liars !
 Ah little rat that borest in the dyke
 Thy hole by night to let the boundless
 deep
 Down upon far-off cities while they
 dance—
 Or dream—of thee they dream'd not—
 nor of me
 These—ay, but each of either : ride, and
 dream
 The mortal dream that never yet was
 mine—
 Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to
 me !
 Then, narrow court and lubber King,
 farewell !
 For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,
 And our wise Queen, if knowing that I
 know,
 Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me
 the more.'

Yet while they rode together down the
 plain,
 Their talk was all of training, terms of art,
 Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lure.

'She is too noble' he said 'to check at
 pies,
 Nor will she rake : there is no baseness
 in her.'
 Here when the Queen demanded as by
 chance
 'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let
 her be,'
 Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off
 The goodly falcon free ; she tower'd ;
 her bells,
 Tone under tone, shrill'd ; and they lifted
 up
 Their eager faces, wondering at the
 strength,
 Boldness and royal knighthood of the bird
 Who pounced her quarry and slew it.
 Many a time
 As once—of old—among the flowers—
 they rode.

But Vivien half-forgotten of the Queen
 Among her damsels broidering sat, heard,
 watch'd
 And whisper'd : thro' the peaceful court
 she crept
 And whisper'd : then as Arthur in the
 highest
 Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the
 lowest,
 Arriving at a time of golden rest,
 And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,
 While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
 And no quest came, but all was joust and
 play,
 Leaven'd his hall. They heard and let
 her be.

Thereafter as an enemy that has left
 Death in the living waters, and with-
 drawn,
 The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.

She hated all the knights, and heard in
 thought
 Their lavish comment when her name
 was named.
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
 Vext at a rumour issued from herself
 Of some corruption crept among his
 knights,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
 Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy
 mood
 With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken
 voice,
 And flutter'd adoration, and at last
 With dark sweet hints of some who
 prized him more
 Than who should prize him most ; at
 which the King
 Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by :
 But one had watch'd, and had not held
 his peace :
 It made the laughter of an afternoon
 That Vivien should attempt the blameless
 King.
 And after that, she set herself to gain
 Him, the most famous man of all those
 times,
 Merlin, who knew the range of all their
 arts,
 Had built the King his havens, ships,
 and halls,
 Was also Bard, and knew the starry
 heavens ;
 The people call'd him Wizard ; whom at
 first
 She play'd about with slight and sprightly
 talk,
 And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd
 points
 Of slander, glancing here and grazing
 there ;
 And yielding to his kindlier moods, the
 Seer
 Would watch her at her petulance, and
 play,
 Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and
 laugh
 As those that watch a kitten ; thus he
 grew
 Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and
 she,
 Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
 Began to break her sports with graver fits,
 Turn red or pale, would often when they
 met
 Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
 With such a fixt devotion, that the old
 man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at
 times
 Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
 And half believe her true : for thus at
 times

He waver'd ; but that other clung to him,
 Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy ;
 He walk'd with dreams and darkness,
 and he found

A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
 An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
 World-war of dying flesh against the life,
 Death in all life and lying in all love,
 The meanest having power upon the
 highest,

And the high purpose broken by the
 worm.

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the
 beach ;

There found a little boat, and stept into
 it ;

And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her
 not.

She took the helm and he the sail ; the
 boat

Drave with a sudden wind across the
 deeps,

And touching Breton sands, they dis-
 embark'd.

And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
 Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.

For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
 The which if any wrought on anyone

With woven paces and with waving arms,
 The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie

Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
 From which was no escape for evermore ;

And none could find that man for ever-
 more,

Nor could he see but him who wrought
 the charm

Coming and going, and he lay as dead
 And lost to life and use and name and
 fame.

And Vivien ever sought to work the
 charm

Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,

As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she
quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd
his feet,

As if in deepest reverence and in love.
A twist of gold was round her hair ; a
robe

Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome
limbs,

In colour like the satin-shining palm
On sallows in the windy gleams of March :
And while she kiss'd them, crying,

'Trample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the
world,

And I will pay you worship ; tread me
down

And I will kiss you for it ;' he was mute :
So dark a forethought roll'd about his
brain,

As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long
sea-hall

In silence : wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
'O Merlin, do ye love me ?' and again,
'O Merlin, do ye love me ?' and once
more,

'Great Master, do ye love me ?' he was
mute.

And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee
and sat,

Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake ; and letting her left
hand

Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to
part

The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes : then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love
Love most, say least,' and Vivien an-
swer'd quick,

'I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot :

But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid
child !

Yet you are wise who say it ; let me think
Silence is wisdom : I am silent then,
And ask no kiss ;' then adding all at once,
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,
drew

The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild
wood

Without one word. So Vivien call'd
herself,

But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour ; till he sadly
smiled :

'To what request for what strange boon,'
he said,

'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble ? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
'What, O my Master, have ye found
your voice ?

I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at
last !

But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink : no cup had we :
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the
spring

That gather'd trickling dropwise from
the cleft,

And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling : then you
drank

And knew no more, nor gave me one
poor word ;

O no more thanks than might a goat have
given

With no more sign of reverence than a
beard.

And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of
those

Deep meadows we had traversed, did
you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?

And yet no thanks: and all thro' this wild wood

And all this morning when I fondled you: Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so strange—

How had I wrong'd you? surely ye are wise,

But such a silence is more wise than kind.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said:

'O did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave

Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?

Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.

And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court

To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd;

And when I look'd, and saw you following still,

My mind involved yourself the nearest thing

In that mind-mist: for shall I tell you truth?

You seem'd that wave about to break upon me

And sweep me from my hold upon the world,

My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child.

Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.

And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,

Once for wrong done you by confusion, next

For thanks it seems till now neglected, last

For these your dainty gambols: wherefore ask;

And take this boon so strange and not so strange.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully:

'O not so strange as my long asking it,
Not yet so strange as you yourself are strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.

I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine;
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me wrong.

The people call you prophet: let it be:
But not of those that can expound themselves.

Take Vivien for expounder; she will call
That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours

No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than yourself,

Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again: for see you not, dear love,

That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd

Your fancy when ye saw me following you,

Must make me fear still more you are not mine,

Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,

And make me wish still more to learn this charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,
As proof of trust. O Merlin, teach it me.

The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.

For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,

I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.

And therefore be as great as ye are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.

How hard you look and how denyingly!
O, if you think this wickedness in me,

That I should prove it on you unawares,
That makes me passing wrathful; then our bond

Had best be loosed for ever: but think or not,

By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk :

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell

Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,

If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am ;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love : because I think,
However wise, ye hardly know me yet.'

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,

'I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you talk of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a charm.

Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man

Thro' woman the first hour ; for howso'er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,

In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the lines,

I call it,—well, I will not call it vice :
But since you name yourself the summer fly,

I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness :
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will ye never ask some other boon ?
Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much.'

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid

That ever bided tryst at village stile,

Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears :
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your maid ;

Caress her : let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme
Of "trust me not at all or all in all."
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

"In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers :
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all."

"It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

"The little rift within the lover's lute
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

"It is not worth the keeping : let it go :
But shall it ? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all."

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme ?'

And Merlin look'd and half believed her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears

Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower :

And yet he answer'd half indignantly :

'Far other was the song that once I heard

By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit :
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.

It was the time when first the question rose

About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.

And each incited each to noble deeds.
And while we waited, one, the youngest
of us,

We could not keep him silent, out he
flash'd,

And into such a song, such fire for fame,
Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
That when he stopt we long'd to hurl
together,

And should have done it; but the beau-
teous beast

Scared by the noise upstart'd at our feet,
And like a silver shadow slipt away

Thro' the dim land; and all day long we
rode

Thro' the dim land against a rushing
wind,

That glorious roundel echoing in our
ears,

And chased the flashes of his golden horns
Until they vanish'd by the fairy well

That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
Where children cast their pins and nails,

and cry,
“Laugh, little well!” but touch it with

a sword,
It buzzes fiercely round the point; and
there

We lost him: such a noble song was that.
But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet

rhyme,
I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,

Were proving it on me, and that I lay
And felt them slowly ebbing, name and

fame.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
fully:

‘O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
And all thro' following you to this wild

wood,
Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.

Lo now, what hearts have men! they
never mount

As high as woman in her selfless mood.
And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my

song,
Take one verse more—the lady speaks it
—this:

“My name, once mine, now thine, is
closelier mine,

For fame, could fame be mine, that fame
were thine,

And shame, could shame be thine, that
shame were mine.

So trust me not at all or all in all.”

‘Says she not well? and there is more
—this rhyme

Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the
Queen,

That burst in dancing, and the pearls
were spilt;

Some lost, some stolen, some as relics
kept.

But nevermore the same two sister pearls
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each

other
On her white neck—so is it with this

rhyme:
It lives dispersedly in many hands,

And every minstrel sings it differently;
Yet is there one true line, the pearl of

pearls:
“Man dreams of Fame while woman
wakes to love.”

Yea! Love, tho' Love were of the gross-
est, carves

A portion from the solid present, eats
And uses, careless of the rest; but Fame,

The Fame that follows death is nothing
to us;

And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,
And counterchanged with darkness? ye

yourself
Know well that Envy calls you Devil's

son,
And since ye seem the Master of all Art,

They fain would make you Master of all
vice.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and
said,

‘I once was looking for a magic weed,
And found a fair young squire who sat

alone,
Had carved himself a knightly shield of

wood,
And then was painting on it fancied arms,

Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun
In dexter chief; the scroll "I follow
fame."

And speaking not, but leaning over him,
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a Gardener putting in a graft,
With this for motto, "Rather use than
fame."

You should have seen him blush; but
afterwards

He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me
well;

For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and
Love

Should have some rest and pleasure in
himself,

Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too prurient for a proof against the grain
Of him ye say ye love: but Fame with
men,

Being but ampler means to serve man-
kind,

Should have small rest or pleasure in
herself,

But work as vassal to the larger love,
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame
again

Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my
boon!

What other? for men sought to prove me
vile,

Because I fain had given them greater
wits:

And then did Envy call me Devil's son:
The sick weak beast seeking to help her-
self

By striking at her better, miss'd, and
brought

Her own claw back, and wounded her
own heart.

Sweet were the days when I was all un-
known,

But when my name was lifted up, the
storm

Brake on the mountain and I cared not
for it.

Right well know I that Fame is half-
disfame,

Yet needs must work my work. That
other fame,

To one at least, who hath not children,
vague,

The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it: a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars

That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt

Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I
fear,

Giving you power upon me thro' this
charm,

That you might play me falsely, having
power,

However well ye think ye love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupilage

Have turn'd to tyrants when they came
to power)

I rather dread the loss of use than fame;
If you—and not so much from wickedness,

As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,

To keep me all to your own self,—or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—

Should try this charm on whom ye say ye
love.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in
wrath:

'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted.
Good!

Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;
And being found take heed of Vivien.

A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born

Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine

Without the full heart back may merit well
Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,

My daily wonder is, I love at all.

And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
O to what end, except a jealous one,

And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?

I well believe that all about this world
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,

Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore.'

Then the great Master merrily answer'd
 her :
 'Full many a love in loving youth was
 mine ;
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine
 But youth and love ; and that full heart
 of yours
 Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you
 mine ;
 So live uncharm'd. For those who
 wrought it first,
 The wrist is parted from the hand that
 waved,
 The feet unmortised from their ankle-
 bones
 Who paced it, ages back : but will ye hear
 The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme ?
 'There lived a king in the most Eastern
 East,
 Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
 Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
 A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
 Whose bark had plunder'd twenty name-
 less isles ;
 And passing one, at the high peep of
 dawn,
 He saw two cities in a thousand boats
 All fighting for a woman on the sea.
 And pushing his black craft among them
 all,
 He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought
 her off,
 With loss of half his people arrow-slain ;
 A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
 They said a light came from her when she
 moved :
 And since the pirate would not yield her
 up,
 The King impaled him for his piracy ;
 Then made her Queen : but those isle-
 nurtured eyes
 Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
 On all the youth, they sicken'd ; councils
 thinn'd,
 And armies waned, for magnet-like she
 drew
 The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts ;
 And beasts themselves would worship ;
 camels knelt

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain
 back
 That carry kings in castles, bow'd black
 knees
 Of homage, ringing with their serpent
 hands,
 To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
 What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
 His horns of proclamation out thro' all
 The hundred under-kingdoms that he
 sway'd
 To find a wizard who might teach the King
 Some charm, which being wrought upon
 the Queen
 Might keep her all his own : to such a one
 He promised more than ever king has
 given,
 A league of mountain full of golden mines,
 A province with a hundred miles of coast,
 A palace and a princess, all for him :
 But on all those who tried and fail'd, the
 King
 Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning
 by it
 To keep the list low and pretenders back,
 Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
 Their heads should moulder on the city
 gates.
 And many tried and fail'd, because the
 charm
 Of nature in her overbore their own :
 And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the
 walls :
 And many weeks a troop of carrion crows
 Hung like a cloud above the 'gateway
 towers.'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said :
 'I sit and gather honey ; yet, methinks,
 Thy tongue has tript a little : ask thyself.
 The lady never made *unwilling* war
 With those fine eyes : she had her pleasure
 in it,
 And made her good man jealous with good
 cause.
 And lived there neither dame nor damsel
 then
 Wroth at a lover's loss ? were all as tame,
 I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair ?
 Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her paler with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days: but did
they find

A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?'

She ceased, and made her lithe arm
round his neck
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her
eyes
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a
bride's
On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing, 'Nay, not like
to me.

At last they found—his foragers for
charms—

A little glassy-headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass;
Read but one book, and ever reading
grew

So grated down and filed away with
thought,

So lean his eyes were monstrous; while
the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and
spine.

And since he kept his mind on one sole
aim,

Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted
flesh,

Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting
men

Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the
wall,

And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting
storm;

Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood
roar'd,

And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow,
sunn'd

The world to peace again: here was the
man.

And so by force they dragg'd him to the
King.

And then he taught the King to charm
the Queen

In such-wise, that no man could see her
more,

Nor saw she save the King, who wrought
the charm,

Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life: but when the King
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on
grass,

And vanish'd, and his book came down
to me.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily:
'Ye have the book: the charm is written
in it:

Good: take my counsel: let me know it
at once:

For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd
thirty-fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a
mound

As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the
charm:

Then, if I tried it, who should blame me
then?'

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her:

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,
But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by.
So long, that mountains have arisen since

With cities on their flanks—thou read the book !

And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd

With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye ; but the long sleepless
nights

Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I ;
And none can read the comment but
myself ;

And in the comment did I find the charm.
O, the results are simple ; a mere child
Might use it to the harm of anyone,
And never could undo it : ask no more :
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath ye sware, ye might,
perchance,

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because ye dream they babble of
you.'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger,
said :

'What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?
They ride abroad redressing human
wrongs !

They sit with knife in meat and wine in
horn !

They bound to holy vows of chastity !
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for
shame.

Not one of all the drove should touch me :
swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her
words :

'You breathe but accusation vast and
vague,

Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If
ye know,

Set up the charge ye know, to stand or
fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrath-
fully :

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his
wife

And two fair babes, and went to distant
lands ;

Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three ? there lay the reckling,
one

But one hour old ! What said the happy
sire ?

A seven-months' babe had been a truer gift.
Those twelve sweet moons confused his
fatherhood.'

Then answer'd Merlin, 'Nay, I know
the tale.

Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame :
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from
his wife :

One child they had : it lived with her :
she died :

His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charged by Valence to bring home
the child.

He brought, not found it therefore : take
the truth.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'overtrue a tale.
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagamore,
That ardent man ? "to pluck the flower
in season,"

So says the song, "I trow it is no treason."
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the
hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd, 'Overquick art
thou

To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the
wing

Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole
prey

Is man's good name : he never wrong'd
his bride.

I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-
room'd

And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace : then he found a door,
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his
own ;

And wearied out made for the couch and
slept,

A stainless man beside a stainless maid ;
And either slept, nor knew of other there ;
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely
down,

Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from
her :

But when the thing was blazed about the
court,

The brute world howling forced them into
bonds,

And as it chanced they are happy, being
pure.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely
too.

What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of
Christ,

Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold.
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead !'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her
charge,

'A sober man is Percivale and pure ;
But once in life was fluster'd with new
wine,

Then paced for coolness in the chapel-
yard ;

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's
mark ;

And that he sinn'd is not believable ;
For, look upon his face !—but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings
remorse,

Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be :
Or else were he, the holy king, whose
hymns

Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye
more ?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in
wrath :

'O ay ; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend

Traitor or true ? that commerce with the
Queen,

I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner ? do ye know
it ?'

To which he answer'd sadly, 'Yea, I
know it.

Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she watch'd him from
her walls.

A rumour runs, she took him for the King,
So fixt her fancy on him : let them be.
But have ye no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless
man ?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling
laugh :

'Man ! is he man at all, who knows and
winks ?

Sees what his fair bride is and does, and
winks ?

By which the good King means to blind
himself,

And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood
earns,

Could call him the main cause of all their
crime ;

Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward,
and fool.'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing,
said :

'O true and tender ! O my liege and
King !

O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye-wit-
ness fain

Have all men true and leal, all women
pure ;

How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible

To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle
street,

Is thy white blamelessness accounted
blame !'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her
tongue

Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad
clean.

Her words had issue other than she
will'd.

He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down,
and made

A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, 'Tell *her* the
charm !

So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she rail. What did the wanton say?
"Not mount as high;" we scarce can sink
as low :

For men at most differ as Heaven and
earth,

But women, worst and best, as Heaven
and Hell.

I know the Table Round, my friends of
old ;

All brave, and many generous, and some
chaste.

She cloaks the scar of some repulse with
lies ;

I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,
Being so bitter : for fine plots may fail,

Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.

I will not let her know : nine tithes of
times

Face-flatterer and backbiter are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a
crime

Are prone to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range ; or low desire

Not to feel lowest makes them level all ;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the
plain,

To leave an equal baseness ; and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find

Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so
small,

Inflate themselves with some insane
delight,

And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see

Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual
fire,

And touching other worlds. I am weary
of her.'

He spoke in words part heard, in
whispers part,

Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and
chin.

But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his
mood,

And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or
thrice,

Leapt from her session on his lap, and
stood

Stiff as a viper frozen ; loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of
death !

White was her cheek ; sharp breaths of
anger puff'd

Her fairly nostril out ; her hand half-
clench'd

Went faltering sideways downward to her
belt,

And feeling ; had she found a dagger
there

(For in a wink the false love turns to
hate)

She would have stabb'd him ; but she
found it not :

His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,

A long, long weeping, not consolable.
Then her false voice made way, broken
with sobs :

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,
Or sung in song ! O vainly lavish'd love !

O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in
love,

So love be true, and not as yours is—
nothing

Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust

Who call'd her what he call'd her—all
her crime,
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly
hers.'

She mused a little, and then clapt her
hands
Together with a wailing shriek, and said :
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to
the heart !
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's
milk !

Kill'd with a word worse than a life of
blows !

I thought that he was gentle, being great :
O God, that I had loved a smaller man !
I should have found in him a greater
heart.

O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
The knights, the court, the King, dark
in your light,

Who loved to make men darker than they
are,

Because of that high pleasure which I
had

To seat you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship—I am answer'd, and hence-
forth

The course of life that seem'd so flowery
to me

With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken
short,

And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and
there,

If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness.'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung
her head,

The snake of gold slid from her hair, the
braid

Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward
the storm

In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her
true :

Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
'Come from the storm,' and having no
reply,

Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the
face

Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or
shame ;

Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching
terms,

To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in
vain.

At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled
there.

There while she sat, half-falling from his
knees,

Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her closed eye-
lid yet,

About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.

But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and
stood,

A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him: then she
said :

'There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore;
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own
gross heart

Would reckon worth the taking? I will
go.

In truth, but one thing now—better have
died

Thrice than have ask'd it once—could
make me stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in
vain !

How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you
then,

Who knows? once more. Lo! what was
once to me

Mere matter of the fancy, now hath grown
The vast necessity of heart and life.

Farewell ; think gently of me, for I fear
My fate or folly, passing gayer youth
For one so old, must be to love thee still.
But ere I leave thee let me swear once
more
That if I schemed against thy peace in
this,
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er
me, send
One flash, that, missing all things else,
may make
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie.'

Scarce had she ceased, when out of
heaven a bolt
(For now the storm was close above them)
struck,
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
With darted spikes and splinters of the
wood

The dark earth round. He raised his
eyes and saw
The tree that shone white-listed thro' the
gloom.

But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her
oath,
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,
And deafen'd with the stammering cracks
and claps

That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
Yet save me !' clung to him and hugg'd
him close ;

And call'd him dear protector in her
fright,

Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd
him close.

The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.
She blamed herself for telling hearsay
tales :

She shook from fear, and for her fault
she wept

Of petulancy ; she call'd him lord and
liege,

Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate
love

Of her whole life ; and ever overhead

Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten
branch

Snap in the rushing of the river-rain
Above them ; and in change of glare and
gloom

Her eyes and neck glittering went and
came ;

Till now the storm, its burst of passion
spent,

Moaning and calling out of other lands,
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once
more

To peace ; and what should not have been
had been,

For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and
slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth
the charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and
fame.

Then crying 'I have made his glory
mine,'
And shrieking out 'O fool !' the harlot
leapt

Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool.'

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the
east

Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;
Which first she placed where morning's
earliest ray

Might strike it, and awake her with the
gleam ;

Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon

All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,

A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.

Nor rested thus content, but day by day,

Leaving her household and good father,
 climb'd
 That eastern tower, and entering barr'd
 her door,
 Stript off the case, and read the naked
 shield,
 Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his
 arms,
 Now made a pretty history to herself
 Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
 And every scratch a lance had made
 upon it,
 Conjecturing when and where: this cut
 is fresh;
 That ten years back; this dealt him at
 Caerlyle;
 That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:
 And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was
 there!
 And here a thrust that might have kill'd,
 but God
 Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his
 enemy down,
 And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good
 shield
 Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his
 name?
 He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
 For the great diamond in the diamond
 jousts,
 Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that
 name
 Had named them, since a diamond was
 the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd
 him King,
 Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
 Had found a glen, gray boulder and black
 tarn.
 A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
 Like its own mists to all the mountain
 side:
 For here two brothers, one a king, had
 met
 And fought together; but their names
 were lost;
 And each had slain his brother at a blow;

And down they fell and made the glen
 abhorr'd:
 And there they lay till all their bones
 were bleach'd,
 And lichen'd into colour with the crags:
 And he, that once was king, had on a
 crown
 Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
 And Arthur came, and labouring up the
 pass,
 All in a misty moonshine, unawares
 Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and
 the skull
 Brake from the nape, and from the skull
 the crown
 Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
 Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
 And down the shingly scaur he plunged,
 and caught,
 And set it on his head, and in his heart
 Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt
 be King.'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the
 gems
 Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them
 to his knights,
 Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I
 chanced
 Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the
 King's—
 For public use: henceforward let there be,
 Once every year, a joust for one of these:
 For so by nine years' proof we needs
 must learn
 Which is our mightiest, and ourselves
 shall grow
 In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
 The heathen, who, some say, shall rule
 the land
 Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he
 spoke:
 And eight years past, eight jousts had
 been, and still
 Had Lancelot won the diamond of the
 year,
 With purpose to present them to the
 Queen,
 When all were won; but meaning all at
 once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken
word.

Now for the central diamond and the
last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his
court
Hard on the river nigh the place which
now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guine-
vere,

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she
said, 'ye know it.'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the
great deeds

Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on.' And the
Queen

Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the
King.

He thinking that he read her meaning
there,

'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is
more

Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a
heart

Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make
complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Urged him to speak against the truth,
and say,

'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly
whole,

And lets me from the saddle;' and the
King

Glanced first at him, then her, and went
his way.

No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot,
much to blame!

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the
knights

Are half of them our enemies, and the
crowd

Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones,
who take

Their pastime now the trustful King is
gone!"

Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain:
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved
me first.

Then of the crowd ye took no more account
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade
of grass,

And every voice is nothing. As to
knights,

Them surely can I silence with all ease.
But now my loyal worship is allow'd

Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guine-
vere,

The pearl of beauty: and our knights at
feast

Have pledged us in this union, while the
King

Would listen smiling. How then? is
there more?

Has Arthur spoken aught? or would
yourself,

Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless
King,

That passionate perfection, my good
lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me: only here to-day
There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his
eyes:

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with
him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself: but, friend,
to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
 For who loves me must have a touch of
 earth ;
 The lowsun makes the colour : I am yours,
 Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the
 bond.
 And therefore hear my words : go to the
 jousts :
 The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our
 dream
 Whensweetest ; and the vermin voices here
 May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but
 they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
 knights :
 'And with what face, after my pretext
 made,
 Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
 Before a King who honours his own
 word,
 As if it were his God's?'

'Yea,' said the Queen,
 'A moral child without the craft to rule,
 Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
 If I must find you wit: we hear it said
 That men go down before your spear at
 a touch,
 But knowing you are Lancelot; your great
 name,
 This conquers: hide it therefore; go
 unknown :
 Win! by this kiss you will: and our true
 King
 Will then allow your pretext, O my
 knight,
 As all for glory; for to speak him true,
 Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he
 seem,
 No keener hunter after glory breathes.
 He loves it in his knights more than
 himself:
 They prove to him his work: win and
 return.'

Thengot Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
 Wroth at himself. Not willing to be
 known,
 He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the
 rarer foot,
 And there among the solitary downs,
 Full often lost in fancy, lost his way ;
 Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
 That all in loops and links among the
 dales
 Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
 Fired from the west, far on a hill, the
 towers.
 Thither he made, and blew the gateway
 horn.
 Then came an old, dumb, myriad-
 wrinkled man,
 Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
 And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless
 man ;
 And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
 With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir
 Lavaine,
 Moving to meet him in the castle court ;
 And close behind them stept the lily maid
 Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
 There was not: some light jest among
 them rose
 With laughter dying down as the great
 knight
 Approach'd them: then the Lord of
 Astolat :
 'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by
 what name
 Livest between the lips? for by thy state
 And presence I might guess thee chief of
 those,
 After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
 Him have I seen: the rest, his Table
 Round,
 Known as they are, to me they are un-
 known.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
 knights :
 'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and
 known,
 What I by mere mischance have brought,
 my shield.
 But since I go to joust as one unknown
 At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
 Hereafter ye shall know me—and the
 shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not
mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here
is Torre's :

Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank
enough.'

His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have
it.'

Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir
Churl,

Is that an answer for a noble knight?

Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger
here,

He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an
hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame
me not

Before this noble knight,' said young
Lavaine,

'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on
Torre :

He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go :
A jest, no more ! for, knight, the maiden
dreamt

That some one put this diamond in her
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike ; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier. All was
jest.

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight :
Win shall I not, but do my best to win :
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd
Lancelot,

Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost
myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and
friend :

And you shall win this diamond,—as I
hear

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'

'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple
maids.'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement

Before the stranger knight, who, looking
at her,

Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd :

'If what is fair be but for what is fair,

And only queens are to be counted so,

Rash were my judgment then, who deem
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased : the lily maid
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.

The great and guilty love he bare the
Queen,

In battle with the love he bare his lord,

Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere
his time.

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the
world,

Had been the sleeker for it : but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.

Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest
man

That ever among ladies ate in hall,

And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.

However marr'd, of more than twice her
years,

Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the
cheek,

And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up
her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was
her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of
the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half
disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind :
Whom they with meats and vintage of
their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table
Round,
And ever well and readily answer'd he :
But Lancelot, when they glanced at
Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years
before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his
tongue.
'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce
design
Against my house, and him they caught
and maim'd ;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among
the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur
broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine
said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of
youth
Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have
fought.
O tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot
spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent
Glem ;

And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas ; that on Bassa ; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy
skirts

Of Celidon the forest ; and again
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious
King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald cēter'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he
breathed ;

And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild
white Horse

Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath
Treoit,

Where many a heathen fell ; 'and on the
mount

Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them ; and I saw him, after,
stand

High on a heap of slain, from spur to
plume

Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
"They are broken, they are broken !"
for the King,

However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the
jousts—

For if his own knight cast him down, he
laughs

Saying, his knights are better men than
he—

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him : I never saw his like : there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
'Save your great self, fair lord ;' and
when he fell

From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him
cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature: and she
thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence,
full
Of noble things, and held her from her
sleep.
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the
thought
She needs must bid farewell to sweet
Lavaine.
First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the
court,
'This shield, my friend, where is it?'
and Lavaine
Past inward, as she came from out the
tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,
and smooth'd
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she
drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more
amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
'Fair lord, whose name I know not—
noble it is,

I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favour at this journey?' 'Nay,' said
he,
'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favour of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those, who know me,
know.'
'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing
mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble
lord,
That those who know should know you.'
And he turn'd
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True,
my child.
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it?' and she told him 'A red
sleeve
Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it:
then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with
delight;
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd
shield,
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my
shield
In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your
squire!'
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily
maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you
hence to bed.'
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own
hand,
And thus they moved away: she stay'd
a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate,
and there—
Her bright hair blown about the serious
face

Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near
 the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms
 far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took
 the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past
 away
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs,
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived
 a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and
 pray'd,
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
 And cells and chambers: all were fair
 and dry;
 The green light from the meadows under-
 neath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
 And poplars made a noise of falling
 showers.
 And thither wending there that night they
 bode.

But when the next day broke from
 underground,
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the
 cave,
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and
 rode away:
 Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold
 my name
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the
 Lake,'
 Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant rever-
 ence,
 Dearer to true young hearts than their
 own praise,
 But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it
 indeed?'
 And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'

At last he got his breath and answer'd,
 'One,
 One have I seen—that other, our liege
 lord,
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of
 kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
 He will be there—then were I stricken
 blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they
 reach'd the lists
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half
 round
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear-faced King,
 who sat
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon
 clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed
 in gold,
 And from the carven-work behind him
 crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to
 make
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of
 them
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innu-
 merable
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they
 found
 The new design wherein they lost them-
 selves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless
 king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine
 and said,
 'Me you call great: mine is the firmer
 seat,
 The truer lance: but there is many a youth
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it; and in me there dwells
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
 Of greatness to know well I am not great:

There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped
upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either
side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the
lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly
move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well
perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder
of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd
into it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke,
earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he over-
threw.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith
and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held
the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger
knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other,
'Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force
alone—
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot
worn
Favour of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him,
know.'
'How then? who then?' a fury seized
them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their
steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind
they made
In moving, all together down upon him

Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit,
bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the
skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a
spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the
head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt,
and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and wor-
shipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the
earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where
he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet
endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with,—drave his kith
and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the
lists,
Back to the barrier; then the trumpets
blew
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the
sleeve
Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the
knights,
His party, cried 'Advance and take thy
prize
The diamond;' but he answer'd, 'Diamond
me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow
me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from
the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and
sat,

Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head :'

'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,

'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'

But he, 'I die already with it : draw—Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave

A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,

And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank

For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.

Then came the hermit out and bare him in,

There stanch'd his wound ; and there, in daily doubt

Whether to live or die, for many a week Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove

Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,

And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,

His party, knights of utmost North and West,

Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,

Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,

'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,

Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize

Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'

'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,

So great a knight as we have seen to-day—

He seem'd to me another Lancelot—

Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—

He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,

O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.

Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.

I charge you that you get at once to horse. And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you

Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given :

His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him

No customary honour : since the knight Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,

Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take This diamond, and deliver it, and return,

And bring us where he is, and how he fares,

And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above, To which it made a restless heart, he took,

And gave, the diamond : then from where he sat

At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince

In the mid might and flourish of his May, Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair

and strong,

And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint

And Gareth, a good knight, but there-withal

Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot, Nor often loyal to his word, and now

Wroth that the King's command to sally forth

In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave

The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went ;

While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,

Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath come

Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain

Of glory, and hath added wound to wound, And ridd'n away to die?' So fear'd the

King,

And, after two days' tarriance there,
return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embrac-
ing ask'd,
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay,
lord,' she said.
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the
Queen amazed,
'Was he not with you? won he not your
prize?'
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why that like
was he.'
And when the King demanded how she
knew,
Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted
from us,
Than Lancelot told me of a common
talk
That men went down before his spear at
a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great
name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide
his name
From all men, ev'n the King, and to this
end
Had made the pretext of a hindering
wound,
That he might joust unknown of all, and
learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he
learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."'

Then replied the King :
'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted
thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True,
indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter :
now remains
But little cause for laughter: his own
kin—

Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,
this !—
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon
him ;
So that he went sore wounded from the
field :
Yet good news too : for goodly hopes are
mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great
pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, lord,' she said,
'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that,
she choked,
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
Past to her chamber, and there flung
herself
Down on the great King's couch, and
writhed upon it,
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the
palm,
And shriek'd out 'Traitor' to the un-
hearing wall,
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose
again,
And moved about her palace, proud and
pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region
round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the
quest,
Touch'd at all points, except the poplar
grove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat :
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the
maid
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from
Camelot, lord ?
What of the knight with the red sleeve ?'
'He won.'
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from
the jousts
Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her
breath ;
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp
lance go ;

Thereon she smote her hand : wellnigh
 she swoon'd :
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,
 came
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the
 Prince
 Reported who he was, and on what quest
 Sent, that he bore the prize and could not
 find
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random
 round
 To seek him, and had wearied of the
 search.
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with
 us,
 And ride no more at random, noble
 Prince !
 Here was the knight, and here he left a
 shield ;
 This will he send or come for : further-
 more
 Our son is with him ; we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear.' To this the cour-
 teous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
 And stay'd ; and cast his eyes on fair
 Elaine :
 Where could be found face daintier ? then
 her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—
 again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd :
 'Well—if I bide, lo ! this wild flower for
 me !'
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, free flashes from a
 height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden elo-
 quence
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, 'Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name ? Why
 slight your King,
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and
 prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and
 went
 To all the winds ?' 'Nay, by mine
 head,' said he,
 'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes ;
 But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
 And when the shield was brought, and
 Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with
 gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh,
 and mock'd :
 'Right was the King ! our Lancelot !
 that true man !'
 'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily,
 'I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest
 knight of all.'
 'And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that
 you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon ! lo,
 ye know it !
 Speak therefore : shall I waste myself in
 vain ?'
 Full simple was her answer, 'What know
 I ?
 My brethren have been all my fellow-
 ship ;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of
 love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they
 talk'd,
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not ; so
 myself—
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love.'
 'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love
 him well,
 But would not, knew ye what all others
 know,
 And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried
 Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away :
 But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a
 little !
 One golden minute's grace ! he wore
 your sleeve :

Would he break faith with one I may not
name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at
last?
Nay—like enow: why then, far be it
from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his
loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full
well
Where your great knight is hidden, let
me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also:
here!
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he
love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times
farewell!
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we
two
May meet at court hereafter: there, I
think,
So ye will learn the courtesies of the
court,
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he
gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the
quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he
went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told
the King
What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is
the knight.'
And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I
learnt;
But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all
round
The region: but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him;
and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,

I gave the diamond: she will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-
place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd,
and replied,
'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all
in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without
a word,
Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and
buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues
were loosed:
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lance-
lot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the
Queen's, and all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but
most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old
dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the
sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it
before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have
stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tran-
quillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder
flared:
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or
thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the
Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen,
who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet
unseen

Crush'd the wild passion out against the
 floor
 Beneath the banquet, where the meats
 became
 As wormwood, and she hated all who
 pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
 The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her
 heart,

Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
 Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face
 and said,

'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
 Is yours who let me have my will, and
 now,

Sweet father, will you let me lose my
 wits?'

'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore,
 let me hence,'

She answer'd, 'and find out our dear
 Lavaine.'

'Ye will not lose your wits for dear
 Lavaine :

Bide,' answer'd he : 'we needs must hear
 anon

Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she
 said,

'And of that other, for I needs must hence
 And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
 And with mine own hand give his diamond
 to him,

Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
 As yon proud Prince who left the quest
 to me.

Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's
 aid.

The gentler-born the maiden, the more
 bound,

My father, to be sweet and serviceable
 To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
 When these have worn their tokens : let
 me hence

I pray you.' Then her father nodding
 said,

'Ay, ay, the diamond : wit ye well, my
 child,

Right fain were I to learn this knight
 were whole,

Being our greatest : yea, and you must
 give it—

And sure I think this fruit is hung too
 high

For any mouth to gape for save a
 queen's—

Nay, I mean nothing : so then, get you
 gone,

Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
 And while she made her ready for her
 ride,

Her father's latest word humm'd in her
 ear,

'Being so very wilful you must go,'

And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,

'Being so very wilful you must die.'

But she was happy enough and shook it
 off,

As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us ;

And in her heart she answer'd it and said,

'What matter, so I help him back to life?'

Then far away with good Sir Torre for
 guide

Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs

To Camelot, and before the city-gates
 Came on her brother with a happy face
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet

For pleasure all about a field of flowers :

Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she
 cried, 'Lavaine,

How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He
 amazed,

'Torre and Elaine ! why here? Sir
 Lancelot !

How know ye my lord's name is Lance-
 lot?'

But when the maid had told him all her
 tale,

Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his
 moods

Left them, and under the strange-statued
 gate,

Where Arthur's wars were render'd
 mystically,

Past up the still rich city to his kin,

His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot ;
 And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
 Led to the caves : there first she saw the casque
 Of Lancelot on the wall : her scarlet sleeve,
 Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
 Stream'd from it still ; and in her heart she laugh'd,
 Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
 But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
 And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
 His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
 Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
 Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself, Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
 The sound not wonted in a place so still Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
 Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
 'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King :'
 His eyes glisten'd : she fancied 'Is it for me ?'
 And when the maid had told him all the tale
 Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
 Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
 And laid the diamond in his open hand. Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
 That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
 At once she slept like water to the floor. 'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.
 Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said ;

'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.' What might she mean by that ? his large black eyes,
 Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her,
 Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself In the heart's colours on her simple face ;
 And Lancelot look'd and was perplex in mind,
 And being weak in body said no more ; But did not love the colour ; woman's love,
 Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
 And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
 Far up the dim rich city to her kin ; There bode the night : but woke with dawn, and past
 Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields, Thence to the cave : so day by day she past
 In either twilight ghost-like to and fro Gliding, and every day she tended him,
 And likewise many a night : and Lancelot Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
 Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
 Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
 Uncourteous, even he : but the meek maid
 Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
 Milder than any mother to a sick child, And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
 Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love Upbore her ; till the hermit, skill'd in all
 The simples and the science of that time, Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
 And the sick man forgot her simple blush, Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
 Would listen for her coming and regret

Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the
love

Of man and woman when they love their
best,

Closest and sweetest, and had died the
death

In any knightly fashion for her sake.

And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other
world

Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd
him,

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sick-
ness made

Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not
live:

For when the blood ran lustier in him
again,

Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.

Then if the maiden, while that ghostly
grace

Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd
not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right
well

What the rough sickness meant, but what
this meant

She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd
her sight,

And drave her ere her time across the
fields

Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot
be.

He will not love me: how then? must
I die?'

Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few
notes,

Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, 'Must I
die?'

And now to right she turn'd, and now to
left,

And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd,
'death or him,'

Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt
was whole,

To Astolat returning rode the three.

There morn by morn, arraying her sweet
self

In that wherein she deem'd she look'd
her best,

She came before Sir Lancelot, for she
thought

'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'

And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of
him

For her own self or hers; 'and do not
shun

To speak the wish most near to your true
heart;

Such service have ye done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord
am I

In mine own land, and what I will I can.'

Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to
speak.

And Lancelot saw that she withheld her
wish,

And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it
chanced

He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your
wish,

Seeing I go to-day:' then out she brake:
'Going? and we shall never see you more.

And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is
yours.'

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me
die.'

'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'

And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine :
But now there never will be wife of mine.'

'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blase its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said,
'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done.'

'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay !
This is not love : but love's first flash in youth,
Most common : yea, I know it of mine own self :
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age :
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy : further—
Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,

In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied :
'Of all this will I nothing ;' and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father : 'Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me : what I can I will ;'
And there that day remain'd, and toward even
Sent for his shield : full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield ;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat :
His very shield was gone ; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.

But still she heard him, still his picture
form'd

And grew between her and the pictured
wall.

Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted
quietly.

Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace
to thee,

Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all
calm.

But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant
field

Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd ;
the owls

Wailing had power upon her, and she
mixt

Her fancies with the fallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little
song,

And call'd her song 'The Song of Love
and Death,'

And sang it : sweetly could she make
and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain,
in vain ;

And sweet is death who puts an end to
pain :

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter
death must be :

Love, thou art bitter ; sweet is death to
me.

O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to
fade away,

Sweet death, that seems to make us love-
less clay,

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could
be ;

I needs must follow death, who calls for
me ;

Call and I follow, I follow ! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice,
and this,

All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,
and thought

With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of
the house

That ever shrieks before a death,' and
call'd

The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo ! the blood-red light
of dawn

Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let
me die !'

As when we dwell upon a word we
know,

Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and
thought

'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and
lay,

Speaking a still good-morrow with her
eyes.

At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yester-
night

I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the
woods,

And when ye used to take me with the
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it : there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.

And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet ye would not ; but this night I
dream'd

That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my
will :"

And there I woke, but still the wish
remain'd.

So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.

There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at
me ;

But there the fine Gawain will wonder at
me,

And there the great Sir Lancelot muse
at me ;

Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to
me,

Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me
one :

And there the King will know me and
my love,

And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,

And after my long voyage I shall rest !'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child,
ye seem

Light-headed, for what force is yours to
go

So far, being sick ? and wherefore would
ye look

On this proud fellow again, who scorns
us all ?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave
and move,

And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
'I never loved him : an I meet with
him,

I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him
down,

Give me good fortune, I will strike him
dead,

For this discomfort he hath done the
house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be
wroth,

Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the
highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing
'highest?'

(He meant to break the passion in her)
'nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the
highest ;

But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame :
And she returns his love in open shame ;
If this be high, what is it to be low ?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat :
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders: never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me
pass,

My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own
desire ;

For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner ; wherefore
cease,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and
die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and
gone,

She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word ; and when he
ask'd

'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly ;' she replied,
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the
world,

But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
The letter she devised ; which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and
true,

Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest : lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat is gone from out my
heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died

For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the
Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own
self,

And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the
doors.'

She ceased : her father promised ;
whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her
death

Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the
eleventh

Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from
underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent
brows

Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that
shone

Full-summer, to that stream whereon the
barge,

Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to
her

'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the
dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with
the flood—

In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming
down—

And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in
white

All but her face, and that clear-featured
face

Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace
craved

Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and
blow,

With deaths of others, and almost his
own,

The nine-years-fought-for diamonds : for
he saw

One of her house, and sent him to the
Queen

Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen
agreed

With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but
that he,

Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her
feet

For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the
walls,

And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the
stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd,
'Queen,

Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making
them

An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the
swan's

Is tawnier than her cygnet's : these are words :

Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin
in words

Perchance, we both can pardon : but, my
Queen,

I hear of rumours flying thro' your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and
wife,

Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect : let rumours be :
When did not rumours fly ? these, as I
trust

That you trust me in your own nobleness,
'I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,
the Queen

Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them
off,

Till all the place whereon she stood was
green ;

Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive
hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied :

'It may be, I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the
Lake.

Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,

It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and
wrong

To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are
these ?

Diamonds for me ! they had been thrice
their worth

Being your gift, had you not lost your
own.

To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me !
For her ! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you : have your joys
apart.

I doubt not that however changed, you
keep

So much of what is graceful : and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of
courtesy

In which as Arthur's Queen I move and
rule :

So cannot speak my mind. An end to
this !

A strange one ! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her
pearls ;

Deck her with these ; tell her, she shines
me down :

An armlet for an arm to which the
Queen's

Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers
not mine—

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my
will—

She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,

And, thro' the casement standing wide
for heat,

Flung them, and down they flash'd, and
smote the stream.

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as
it were,

Diamonds to meet them, and they past
away.

Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half
disdain

At love, life, all things, on the window
ledge,

Close underneath his eyes, and right
across

Where these had fallen, slowly past the
barge

Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst
away

To weep and wail in secret ; and the
barge,

On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.

There two stood arm'd, and kept the
door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes
that ask'd

'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard
face,

As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken
rocks

On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and
they said,

'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen,
so fair!

Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh
and blood?

Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into **Fairyland.**'

While thus they babbled of the King,
the King

Came girt with knights: then turn'd the
tongueless man

From the half-face to the full eye, and
rose

And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.

So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale

And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;

And reverently they bore her into hall.

Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd
at her,

And Lancelot later came and mused at
her,

And last the Queen herself, and pitied
her:

But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stooped, took, brake seal, and read it;
this was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the
Lake,

I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.

I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my
death.

And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,

And to all other ladies, I make moan:
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;

And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who
read

To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that
her lips,

Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them
all:

'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that
hear,

Know that for this most gentle maiden's
death

Right heavy am I; for good she was and
true,

But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.

Yet to be loved makes not to love again;

Not at my years, however it hold in youth.

I swear by truth and knighthood that I
gave

No cause, not willingly, for such a love:

To this I call my friends in testimony,

Her brethren, and her father, who himself

Besought me to be plain and blunt, and
use,

To break her passion, some discourtesy

Against my nature: what I could, I did.

I left her and I bad her no farewell;

Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would
have died,

I might have put my wits to some rough
use,

And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after
storm)

'Ye might at least have done her so
much grace,

Fair lord, as would have help'd her from
her death.'

He raised his head, their eyes met and
hers fell,

He adding,
 'Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not
 be.
 Then might she follow me thro' the world,
 she ask'd ;
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken
 down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then
 would I,
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow
 seas,
 To keep them in all joyance : more than
 this
 I could not ; this she would not, and she
 died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my
 knight,
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
 And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
 To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in
 all the realm
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
 The marshall'd Order of their Table
 Round,
 And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
 And when the knights had laid her comely
 head
 Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
 Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let
 her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
 Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
 In letters gold and azure!' which was
 wrought
 Thereafter ; but when now the lords and
 dames

And people, from the high door stream-
 ing, brake
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved
 apart,
 Drew near, and sigh'd in passing,
 'Lancelot,
 Forgive me ; mine was jealousy in love.'
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
 'That is love's curse ; pass on, my Queen,
 forgiven.'
 But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
 Approach'd him, and with full affection
 said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom
 I have
 Most joy and most affiance, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watch'd thee at
 the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long practised
 knight,
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by
 To win his honour and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved ; but now I would to
 God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden,
 shaped, it seems,
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a
 lonely man
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the
 Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fair she was,
 my King,
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
 To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
 To doubt her pureness were to want a
 heart—
 Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
 Could bind him, but free love will not be
 bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said
the King.
'Let love be free; free love is for the
best :
And, after heaven, on our dull side of
death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but
he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her
moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and
sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for
thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at
last—
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous
pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and
fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to
me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a
reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the
wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and
morn
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair,
my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er
it be!

For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and
have it :
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me: but what use in
it?
To make men worse by making my sin
known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must
break
These bonds that so defame me: not
without
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then
may God,
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten
mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the
hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful
pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess
done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd
The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for
the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after,
died.
And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the
rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his
heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they
sat

Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening
half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into
smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he
died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Per-
civale :

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree
smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred
years :
For never have I known the world with-
out,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale : but
thee,
When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—
I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall ;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King ; and
now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table
Round,
My brother ? was it earthly passion crost ?'

'Nay,' said the knight ; 'for no such
passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle
out
Among us in the jousts, while women
watch
Who wins, who falls ; and waste the
spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk : 'The Holy
Grail !—I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes ; but here
too much
We moulder—as to things without I
mean—
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of
ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,

But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What
is it ?

The phantom of a cup that comes and
goes ?'

'Nay, monk ! what phantom ?' answer'd
Percivale.

'The cup, the cup itself, from which our
Lord

Drank at the last sad supper with his
own.

This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good
saint

Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our
Lord.

And there awhile it bode ; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at
once,

By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and dis-
appear'd.'

To whom the monk : 'From our old
books I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to
build ;

And there he built with wattles from the
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day ?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a
nun,

And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister ; and if ever holy maid

With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid ; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human
love,

Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot

Only to holy things ; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,

Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what

Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again ;

But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,

And heal the world of all their wickedness !
"O Father !" ask'd the maiden, "might it come

To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay," said he,

"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought

She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.

And when she came to speak, behold her eyes

Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.

And "O my brother Percivale," she said,

"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail :

For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use

To hunt by moonlight ;' and the slender sound

As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,

Was like that music as it came ; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,

Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed

With rosy colours leaping on the wall ;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls

The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,

That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this

To all men ; and myself fasted and pray'd

Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved

Among us in white armour, Galahad.
"God make thee good as thou art beautiful,"

Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight :
and none,

In so young youth, was ever made a knight
 Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
 My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
 His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
 Hers, and himself her brother more than I.
 'Sister or brother none had he; but some
 Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
 Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,
 Like birds of passage piping up and down,
 That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;
 For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
 Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
 Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
 And out of this she plaited broad and long
 A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
 And crimson in the belt a strange device,
 A crimson grail within a silver beam;
 And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
 Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
 O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
 I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
 Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
 And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
 Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake
 She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
 Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
 On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
 In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
 Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
 And carven with strange figures; and in and out
 The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
 Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
 And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"
 Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,
 "No man could sit but he should lose himself:"
 And once by misadventence Merlin sat
 In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
 Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
 Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
 While the great banquet lay along the hall,
 That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
 A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
 And rending, and a blast, and overhead
 Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
 And in the blast there smote along the hall
 A beam of light seven times more clear
 than day:
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
 All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
 And none might see who bare it, and it past.
 But every knight beheld his fellow's face
 As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
 And staring each at other like dumb men
 Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
 Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
 A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
 Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it ; and Galahad sware the
vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,
sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among
the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the
rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale,
'the King,
Was not in hall: for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help: for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky
arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all
she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest: so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those
wild bees
That made such honey in his realm.
Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot; whence the
King
Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there!
the roofs
Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-
smoke!
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the
bolt."
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under
heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty
hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing
brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin
built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set
betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing
wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern
Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the
crown
And both the wings are made of gold,
and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King."

'And, brother, had you known our hall
within,
Broader and higher than any in all the
lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon
Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of
our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount
and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank: and who shall blazon it?
when and how?—
O there, perchance, when all our wars are
done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

'So to this hall full quickly rode the
King,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,
wrapt
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.

And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all :
And many of those who burnt the hold,
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with
smoke, and sear'd,
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest : and then the
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is
this?"

"O brother, when I told him what had
chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than
once,

When some brave deed seem'd to be done
in vain,
Darken ; and "Woe is me, my knights,"
he cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn
the vow."

Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself
been here,
My King, thou wouldst have sworn."
"Yea, yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the
Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I
saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw."

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by
knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as
one :

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn
our vows."

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye
seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in
a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
"O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me."

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the
King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was hard upon his
knights)

"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will
sing.

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger
knight,

Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Per-
civales"

(For thus it pleased the King to range
me close

After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he,
"but men

With strength and will to right the
wrong'd, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles
splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own
heathen blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will
see.

Go, since your vows are sacred, being
made :

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my
realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my
knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come
and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering
fires

Lost in the quagmire ! Many of you, yea
most,

Return no more : ye think I show myself

Too dark a prophet: come now, let us
meet
The morrow morn once more in one full
field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the
King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may
count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his
knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from
under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur
came ;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their
heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Perci-
vale !"

'But when the next day brake from
under ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would
fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim ; for where
the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass ; and lower, and
where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the
necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers
of flowers
Fell as we past ; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by
name,
Calling "God speed !" but in the ways
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich
and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly
speak
For grief, and all in middle street the
Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd
aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our
sins."
So to the Gate of the three Queens we
came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mys-
tically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and
thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down
the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never
yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth
so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I
knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our
King,
That most of us would follow wandering
fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my
mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once
And every evil thought I had thought of
old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for
thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death ;
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for
thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought
my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then
a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping
white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye ; and o'er the
brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest
here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest ;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning ; and fair the house whereby she
sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious ; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who
should say,
"Rest here ;" but when I touch'd her,
lo ! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe ; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my
thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the
world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the
field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell
down
Before it ; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell
down
Before it, and I knew not why, but
thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels ; and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere :
And on the splendour came, flashing me
blind ;
And seem'd to me the Lord of all the
world,

Being so huge. But when I thought he
meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo ! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he
came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he,
too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and
thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty
hill,
And on the top, a city wall'd : the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into
heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd ; and
these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Perci-
vale !
Thou mightiest and thou purest among
men !"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at
top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I
past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there ; but
there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he
had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet
gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even
as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in
grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the
vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he
said :

‘“O son, thou hast not true humility,
 The highest virtue, mother of them all;
 For when the Lord of all things made
 Himself
 Naked of glory for His mortal change,
 ‘Take thou my robe,’ she said, ‘for all
 is thine,’
 And all her form shone forth with sudden
 light
 So that the angels were amazed, and she
 Follow’d Him down, and like a flying
 star
 Led on the gray-hair’d wisdom of the east;
 But her thou hast not known: for what
 is this
 Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy
 sins?
 Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
 As Galahad.” When the hermit made
 an end,
 In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
 Before us, and against the chapel door
 Laid lance, and enter’d, and we knelt in
 prayer.
 And there the hermit slaked my burning
 thirst,
 And at the sacring of the mass I saw
 The holy elements alone; but he,
 “Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw
 the Grail,
 The Holy Grail, descend upon the
 shrine:
 I saw the fiery face as of a child
 That smote itself into the bread, and went;
 And hither am I come; and never yet
 Hath what thy sister taught me first to
 see,
 This Holy Thing, fail’d from my side, nor
 come
 Cover’d, but moving with me night and
 day,
 Fainter by day, but always in the night
 Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken’d
 marsh
 Blood-red, and on the naked mountain
 top
 Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
 Blood-red. And in the strength of this
 I rode,
 Shattering all evil customs everywhere,

And past thro’ Pagan realms, and made
 them mine,
 And clash’d with Pagan hordes, and bore
 them down,
 And broke thro’ all, and in the strength
 of this
 Come victor. But my time is hard at
 hand,
 And hence I go; and one will crown me
 king
 Far in the spiritual city; and come thou,
 too,
 For thou shalt see the vision when I go.”

 ‘While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling
 on mine,
 Drew me, with power upon me, till I
 grew
 One with him, to believe as he believed.
 Then, when the day began to wane, we
 went.

 ‘There rose a hill that none but man
 could climb,
 Scarr’d with a hundred wintry water
 courses—
 Storm at the top, and when we gain’d it,
 storm
 Round us and death; for every moment
 glanced
 His silver arms and gloom’d: so quick
 and thick
 The lightnings here and there to left and
 right
 Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,
 dead,
 Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
 Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
 On either hand, as far as eye could see,
 A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
 Part black, part whiten’d with the bones
 of men,
 Not to be crost, save that some ancient
 king
 Had built a way, where, link’d with
 many a bridge,
 A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
 And Galahad fled along them bridge by
 bridge,
 And every bridge as quickly as he crost

Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I
 yearn'd
 To follow ; and thrice above him all the
 heavens
 Open'd and blazed with thunder such as
 seem'd
 Shoutings of all the sons of God : and first
 At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
 In silver-shining armour starry-clear ;
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
 Clothed in whitesamite or a luminous cloud.
 And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
 If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
 And when the heavens open'd and blazed
 again
 Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
 And had he set the sail, or had the boat
 Become a living creature clad with wings ?
 And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
 Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
 For now I knew the veil had been with-
 drawn.
 Then in a moment when they blazed again
 Opening, I saw the least of little stars
 Down on the waste, and straight beyond
 the star
 I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
 And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
 No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
 Strike from the sea ; and from the star
 there shot
 A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
 Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
 Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
 Then fell the floods of heaven drowning
 the deep.
 And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
 No memory in me lives ; but that I touch'd
 The chapel-doors at dawn I know ; and
 thence
 Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
 Glad that no phantom vexed me more,
 return'd
 To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's
 wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for
 in sooth
 These ancient books—and they would win
 thee—teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
 With miracles and marvels like to these,
 Not all unlike ; which oftentime I read,
 Who read but on my breviary with ease,
 Till my head swims ; and then go forth
 and pass
 Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
 And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
 To these old walls—and mingle with our
 folk ;
 And knowing every honest face of theirs
 As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
 And every homely secret in their hearts,
 Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
 And ills and aches, and teething, lyings-
 in,
 And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
 That have no meaning half a league away :
 Or lulling random squabbles when they
 rise,
 Chafferings and chatterings at the market-
 cross,
 Rejoice, small man, in this small world
 of mine,
 Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
 O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
 Came ye on none but phantoms in your
 quest,
 No man, no woman ?'

Then Sir Percivale :
 'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
 And women were as phantoms. O, my
 brother,
 Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
 How far I falter'd from my quest and vow ?
 For after I had lain so many nights,
 A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
 In grass and burdock, I was changed to
 wan
 And meagre, and the vision had not
 come ;
 And then I chanced upon a goodly town
 With one great dwelling in the middle
 of it ;
 Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
 By maidens each as fair as any flower :
 But when they led me into hall, behold,
 The Princess of that castle was the one,
 Brother, and that one only, who had ever

Made my heart leap ; for when I moved
of old

A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing : yet we
twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state
were hers.

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me ; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old ; till one fair
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first
time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning
word,

That most of us would follow wandering
fires,

And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and
tongue :

"We have heard of thee : thou art our
greatest knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe :
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."

O me, my brother ! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own
self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her ;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon
earth.'

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when
yule is cold,

Must be content to sit by little fires.

And this am I, so that ye care for me

Ever so little ; yea, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house
of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to
warm

My cold heart with a friend : but O the
pity

To find thine own first love once more—
to hold,

Hold her a wealthy bride within thine
arms,

Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.

For we that want the warmth of double
life,

We that are plagued with dreams of
something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—

Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,

But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite

All fast and penance. Saw ye none be-
side,

None of your knights ?'

'Yea so,' said Percivale :

'One night my pathway swerving east, I
saw

The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon :

And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him,
and he me,

And each made joy of either ; then he
ask'd,

"Where is he ? hast thou seen him—
Lancelot ?—Once,"

Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me
—mad,

And maddening what he rode : and when
I cried,

'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not

I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way.'

So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on

Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk

And scandal of our table, had return'd ;

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship
him
That ill to him is ill to them ; to Bors
Beyond the rest : he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have
seen,
The Holy Cup of healing ; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest :
If God would send the vision, well : if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of
Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met,
Sir Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their
craggs,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were
left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven : and
their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can
trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at
him
And this high Quest as at a simple thing :
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's
words—
A mocking fire : "what other fire than
he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom
blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is
warm'd ?"
And when his answer chafed them, the
rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their
priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him
into a cell
Of great piled stones ; and lying bounden
there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens
sweep
Over him till by miracle—what else ?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and
fell,

Such as no wind could move : and thro'
the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud : then
came a night
Still as the day was loud ; and thro' the
gap
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table
Round—
For, brother, so one night, because they
roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named
the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar
friends,
In on him shone : "And then to me, to
me,"
Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes
of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for
myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to
me—
In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a
maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.'

To whom the monk : 'And I remember
now
That pelican on the casque : Sir Bors it
was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board ;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he :
A square-set man and honest ; and his
eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a
cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one :
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else ? But when
ye reach'd
The city, found ye all your knights re-
turn'd,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what
the King ?'

Then answer'd Percivale : 'And that
can I,
Brother, and truly ; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we
reach'd
The city, our horses stumbling as they
trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cocka-
trices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the
stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to
the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the daïs-
throne,
And those that had gone out upon the
Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of
them,
And those that had not, stood before the
King,
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bad
me hail,
Saying, "A welfare in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings ;
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of
ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for
us
Half-wrench'd a golden wing ; but now—
the Quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-
bury ?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast
heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning,
ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for
thee ?"

"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for
such as I.

Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not
for me ;

For I was much aweari'd of the Quest :
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it ; and then this
gale

Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort ; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant
to me."

'He ceased ; and Arthur turn'd to
whom at first

He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering,
push'd

Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught
his hand,

Held it, and there, half-hidden by him,
stood,

Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors ! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail ;"
and Bors,

"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it :
I saw it ;" and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for
the rest

Spake but of sundry perils in the storm ;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last ;

"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the
King, "my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for
thee ?"

"Our mightiest !" answer'd Lancelot,
with a groan ;

"O King !" — and when he paused,
methought I spied

A dying fire of madness in his eyes—

"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for
slime,

Slime of the ditch : but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure.

Noble, and knightly in me twined and
 clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome
 flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as
 each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder ; and when thy
 knights
 Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I
 spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and
 said,
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder,
 all
 My quest were but in vain ; to whom I
 vow'd
 That I would work according as he will'd.
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd
 and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old,
 And whipt me into waste fields far away ;
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of
 my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow
 To scare them from me once ; and then
 I came
 All in my folly to the naked shore,
 Wide flats, where nothing but coarse
 grasses grew ;
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the
 sea
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
 Swept like a river, and the clouded
 heavens
 Were shaken with the motion and the
 sound.
 And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a
 boat,
 Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a
 chain ;
 And in my madness to myself I said,
 ' I will embark and I will lose myself,
 And in the great sea wash away my sin.'

I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
 And with me drove the moon and all the
 stars ;
 And the wind fell, and on the seventh
 night
 I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking
 up,
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Car-
 bonek,
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
 And steps that met the breaker ! there
 was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry, and the moon was
 full.
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the
 stairs.
 There drew my sword. With sudden-
 flaring manes
 Those two great beasts rose upright like
 a man,
 Each gript a shoulder, and I stood
 between ;
 And, when I would have smitten them,
 heard a voice,
 ' Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt,
 the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with
 violence
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand,
 and fell.
 And up into the sounding hall I past ;
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Or shield of knight ; only the rounded
 moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
 But always in the quiet house I heard,
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost
 tower
 To the eastward : up I climb'd a thousand
 steps
 With pain : as in a dream I seem'd to
 climb
 For ever : at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard,

'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door ;
It gave ; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd
away—

O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings
and eyes.

And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I
saw

That which I saw ; but what I saw was
veil'd

And cover'd ; and this Quest was not for
me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lance-
lot left

The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish
words,—

A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his
King,—

Well, I will tell thee : "O King, my
liege," he said,

"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of
thine ?

When have I stinted stroke in foughten
field ?

But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men
mad,

Yea, made our mightiest madder than
our least.

But by mine eyes and by mine ears I
swear,

I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

'"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.

But if indeed there came a sign from
heaven,

Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their
sight.

For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could
but speak

His music by the framework and the
chord ;

And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

' "Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot :
never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and
man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might
be,

With such a closeness, but apart there
grew,

Save that he were the swine thou spakest
of,

Some root of knighthood and pure noble-
ness ;

Whereto see thou, that it may bear its
flower.

' "And spake I not too truly, O my
knights ?

Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wan-
dering fires,

Lost in the quagmire ?—lost to me and
gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a
tithe—

And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw ;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right them-
selves,

Cares but to pass into the silent life.

And one hath had the vision face to
face,

And now his chair desires him here in
vain,

However they may crown him elsewhere.

““ And some among you held, that if
the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn
the vow :
Not easily, seeing that the King must
guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to
plow.
Who may not wander from the allotted
field
Before his work be done ; but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will ; and many a time
they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not
earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not
light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again : ye have seen what ye
have seen.”

‘So spake the King : I knew not all
he meant.’

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill
the gap
Left by the Holy Quest ; and as he sat
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a
youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with
him.

‘Make me thy knight, because I know,
Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love.’
Such was his cry : for having heard the
King
Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won

The golden circlet, for himself the sword :
And there were those who knew him near
the King,
And promised for him : and Arthur made
him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the
isles—

But lately come to his inheritance,
And lord of many a barren isle was he—
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun
Beat like a strong knight on his helm,
and reel'd

Almost to falling from his horse ; but
saw

Near him a mound of even-sloping side,
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,
And here and there great hollies under
them ;

But for a mile all round was open space,
And fern and heath : and slowly Pelleas
drew

To that dim day, then binding his good
horse

To a tree, cast himself down ; and as he
lay

At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the
grove,

It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
Flying, and then a fawn ; and his eyes
closed.

And since he loved all maidens, but no
maid

In special, half-awake he whisper'd,
‘Where ?

O where ? I love thee, tho' I know thee
not.

For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and
sword

As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we
meet.’

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might
have seem'd

A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken
stood :

And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one
that,
Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the
light.
There she that seem'd the chief among
them said,
' In happy time behold our pilot-star !
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way :
To right ? to left ? straight forward ? back
again ?
Which ? tell us quickly.'

Pelleas gazing thought,
' Is Guinevere herself so beautiful ?'
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her
bloom
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in woman-
hood ;
And slender was her hand and small her
shape ;
And but for those large eyes, the haunts
of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more. But while
he gazed
The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul :
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to
hers,

Believing her ; and when she spake to
him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a
reply.

For out of the waste isles had he come,
Wheresaving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd
against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea.

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady
round
And look'd upon her people ; and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her com-
pany.
Three knights were thereamong ; and they
too smiled,
Scorning him ; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, ' O wild and of the
woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our
speech ?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair
face,
Lacking a tongue ?'

' O damsel,' answer'd he,
' I woke from dreams ; and coming out
of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and
crave
Pardon : but will ye to Caerleon ? I
Go likewise : shall I lead you to the King ?'

' Lead then,' she said ; and thro' the
woods they went.
And while they rode, the meaning in his
eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her
heart
She mutter'd, ' I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stale !' But since her mind
was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name

And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she
thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet: therefore flatter'd
him,
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem'd
His wish by hers was echo'd; and her
knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to
him,
For she was a great lady.

And when they reach'd
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,'
she said,
'See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight
for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee?'

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay! wilt thou if I
win?'
'Ay, that will I,' she answer'd, and she
laugh'd,
And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it
from her;
Then glanced askew at those three knights
of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her.

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all,
meseems,
Are happy; I the happiest of them all.'
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his
blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among
the leaves;
Then being on the morrow knighted,
sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their
heels
And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of
old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven: so glad
was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and
strange knights
From the four winds came in: and each
one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land,
stream, and sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his
eyes
His neighbour's make and might: and
Pelleas look'd
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King: and him his new-
made knight
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved
him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning
of the jousts,
And this was call'd 'The Tournament of
Youth:.'
For Arthur, loving his young knight,
withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had
the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden: the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with
eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the
field
With honour: so by that strong hand of
his
The sword and golden circlet were
achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved:
the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his
lance,
And there before the people crown'd
herself:
So for the last time she was gracious to
him.

Then at Caerleon for a space—her look
 Bright for all others, cloudier on her
 knight—
 Linger'd Ettarre: and seeing Pelleas
 droop,
 Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee
 much,
 O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
 To him who won thee glory!' And she
 said,
 'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your
 bower,
 My Queen, he had not won.' Whereat
 the Queen,
 As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
 Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went
 her way.

But after, when her damsels, and her-
 self,
 And those three knights all set their
 faces home,
 Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him
 cried,
 'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed
 to say it—
 I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
 Among yourselves. Would rather that
 we had
 Some rough old knight who knew the
 worldly way,
 Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
 And jest with: take him to you, keep
 him off,
 And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
 Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
 Such as the wholesome mothers tell their
 boys.
 Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
 To find his mettle, good: and if he fly
 us,
 Small matter! let him.' This her
 damsels heard,
 And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
 They, closing round him thro' the journey
 home,
 Acted her hest, and always from her side
 Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
 So that he could not come to speech
 with her.

And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang
 the bridge,
 Down rang the grate of iron thro' the
 groove,
 And he was left alone in open field.

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas
 thought,
 'To those who love them, trials of our
 faith.

Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
 For loyal to the uttermost am I.'
 So made his moan; and, darkness falling,
 sought

A priory not far off, there lodged, but
 rose

With morning every day, and, moist or
 dry,

Full-arm'd upon his charger all day long
 Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to
 him.

And this persistence turn'd her scorn
 to wrath.

Then calling her three knights, she
 charged them, 'Out!

And drive him from the walls.' And out
 they came,

But Pelleas overthrew them as they
 dash'd

Against him one by one; and these
 return'd,

But still he kept his watch beneath the
 wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate;
 and once,

A week beyond, while walking on the
 walls

With her three knights, she pointed
 downward, 'Look,

He haunts me—I cannot breathe—be-
 sieges me;

Down! strike him! put my hate into
 your strokes,

And drive him from my walls.' And
 down they went,

And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
 And from the tower above him cried
 Ettarre,

'Bind him, and bring him in.'

He heard her voice ;
Then let the strong hand, which had
overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he over-
threw
Be bounden straight, and so they brought
him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre,
the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one
glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his
bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake, ' Behold
me, Lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will ;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day : for I have sworn my
vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I
know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me
strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy
knight.'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken
mute ;
But when she mock'd his vows and the
great King,
Lighted on words : ' For pity of thine
own self,
Peace, Lady, peace : is he not thine and
mine ?'
' Thou fool,' she said, ' I never heard his
voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him
now,
And thrust him out of doors ; for save
he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more.' And those, her
three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him
from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying, ' There he
watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door !
Kick'd, he returns : do ye not hate him,
ye ?
Ye know yourselves : how can ye hide at
peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence ?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike ? Fall on him all at
once,
And if ye slay him I reckon not : if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in :
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds.'

She spake ; and at her will they couch'd
their spears,
Three against one : and Gawain passing
by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those
towers
A villainy, three to one : and thro' his
heart
The fire of honour and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, ' I strike upon thy
side—
The caitiffs !' ' Nay,' said Pelleas, ' but
forbear ;
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will.'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, with-
held
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and
kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to
three ;
And they rose up, and bound, and brought
him in.
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas,
burn'd
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten
hound :

'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds.
And if he comes again'—there she brake short;
And Pelleas answer'd, 'Lady, for indeed I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful, I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd Thro' evil spite: and if ye love me not, I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn: I had liefer ye were worthy of my love, Than to be loved again of you—farewell; And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love, Vex not yourself: ye will not see me more.'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be: yet him I loved not. Why?
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him
A something—was it nobler than myself?—
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind.
He could not love me, did he know me well.
Nay, let him go—and quickly.' And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls; and afterward,
Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table; yea and he that won

The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd, 'O, their wills are hers
For whom I won the circlet; and mine, hers,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,
Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods;
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face;
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness.'

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will:
But an she send her delegate to thrall
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handleless by the wrist,
And let my lady sear the stump for him,
Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend:
Come, ye know nothing: here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee. She will let me in
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall;
Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
As prowtest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long

To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds
and warm,
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now
thy horse
And armour : let me go : be comforted :
Give me three days to melt her fancy,
and hope
The third night hence will bring thee
news of gold.'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his
arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and
took
Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but
help—
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-
love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so
light.'
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the
wall
Rang out like hollow woods at hunting-
tide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower ;
'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee
not.'
But Gawain lifting up his vizor said,
'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye
hate :
Behold his horse and armour. Open
gates,
And I will make you merry.'

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo !
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
His horse and armour : will ye let him in ?
He slew him ! Gawain, Gawain of the
court,
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the
wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him
nay.'

And so, leave given, straight on thro'
open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted cour-
teously.
'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd. 'Ay, ay,'
said he,
'And oft in dying cried upon your name.'
'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good
knight,
But never let me bide one hour at peace.'
'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair
enow :
But I to your dead man have given my
troth,
That whom ye loathe, him will I make
you love.'

So those three days, aimless about the
land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a
moon
With promise of large light on woods and
ways.

Hot was the night and silent ; but a
sound
Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the
Queen,
And seen her sadden listening—vext his
heart,
And marr'd his rest—'A worm within the
rose.'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous
fair,
One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and
sky,
One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all
mine air—
I cared not for the thorns ; the thorns
were there.

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,
No rose but one—what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose ; a rose that will not
die,—
He dies who loves it,—if the worm be
there.'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the
 doubt,
 'Why lingers Gawain with his golden
 news?'
 So shook him that he could not rest, but
 rode
 Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his
 horse
 Hard by the gates. Wide open were the
 gates,
 And no watch kept; and in thro' these
 he past,
 And heard but his own steps, and his
 own heart
 Beating, for nothing moved but his own
 self,
 And his own shadow. Then he crost
 the court,
 And spied not any light in hall or bower,
 But saw the postern portal also wide
 Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all
 Of roses white and red, and brambles mixt
 And overgrowing them, went on, and
 found,
 Here too, all hush'd below the mellow
 moon,
 Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
 Came lightening downward, and so spilt
 itself
 Among the roses, and was lost again.

Then was he ware of three pavilions
 rear'd
 Above the bushes, gilden-peakt: in one,
 Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
 'Slumbering, and their three squires across
 their feet:
 In one, their malice on the placid lip
 Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels
 lay:
 And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
 Bound on her brow, were Gawain and
 Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the
 leaf
 To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew:
 Back, as a coward slinks from what he
 fears
 To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound

Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
 Creep with his shadow thro' the court
 again,
 Fingering at his sword-handle until he
 stood
 There on the castle-bridge once more, and
 thought,
 'I will go back, and slay them where they
 lie.'

And so went back, and seeing them yet
 in sleep
 Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy
 sleep,
 Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword,
 and thought,
 'What! slay a sleeping knight? the King
 hath bound
 And sworn me to this brotherhood;'
 again,
 'Alas that ever a knight should be so
 false.'
 Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groan-
 ing laid
 The naked sword athwart their naked
 throats,
 There left it, and them sleeping; and she
 lay,
 The circlet of the tourney round her
 brows,
 And the sword of the tourney across her
 throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on
 his horse
 Stared at her towers that, larger than
 themselves
 In their own darkness, throng'd into the
 moon.
 Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs,
 and clench'd
 His hands, and madden'd with himself
 and moan'd:

'Would they have risen against me in
 their blood
 At the last day? I might have answer'd
 them
 Even before high God. O towers so
 strong,

Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze
 The crack of earthquake shivering to your
 base
 Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot
 roofs
 Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro'
 within,
 Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a
 skull !
 Let the fierce east scream thro' your eye-
 let-holes,
 And whirl the dust of harlots round and
 round
 In dung and nettles ! hiss, snake—I saw
 him there—
 Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who
 yells
 Here in the still sweet summer night, but
 I—
 I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her
 fool ?
 Fool, beast—he, she, or I ? myself most
 fool ;
 Beast too, as lacking human wit—dis-
 graced,
 Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
 Love?—we be all alike : only the King
 Hath made us fools and liars. O noble
 vows !
 O great and sane and simple race of brutes
 That own no lust because they have no
 law !
 For why should I have loved her to my
 shame ?
 I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
 I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
 Away—'

 He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
 And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the
 night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on
 her throat,
 Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd
 herself
 To Gawain : 'Liar, for thou hast not slain
 This Pelleas ! here he stood, and might
 have slain
 Me and thyself.' And he that tells the tale

Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
 To Pelleas, as the one true knight on
 earth,
 And only lover ; and thro' her love her
 life
 Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the
 night,
 And over hard and soft, striking the sod
 From out the soft, the spark from off the
 hard,
 Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
 Beside that tower where Percivale was
 cowl'd,
 Glanced from the rosy forehead of the
 dawn.
 For so the words were flash'd into his
 heart
 He knew not whence or wherefore : ' O
 sweet star,
 Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn !'
 And there he would have wept, but felt
 his eyes
 Harder and drier than a fountain bed
 In summer : thither came the village girls
 And linger'd talking, and they come no
 more
 Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from
 the heights
 Again with living waters in the change
 Of seasons : hard his eyes ; harder his
 heart
 Seem'd ; but so weary were his limbs,
 that he,
 Gasping, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
 Here let me rest and die,' cast himself
 down,
 And gulf'd his griefs in inmost sleep ; so
 lay,
 Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
 The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
 Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame,
 and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one
 nigh,
 Sent hands upon him, as to tear him,
 crying,
 'False ! and I held thee pure as Guinevere.'

But Percivale stood near him and
replied,
'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being
one
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
That Lancelot'—there he check'd him-
self and paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with
one
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
That made it plunges thro' the wound
again,
And pricks it deeper: and he shrank and
wail'd,
'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was
mute.
'Have any of our Round Table held their
vows?'
And Percivale made answer not a word.
'Is the King true?' 'The King!' said
Percivale.
'Why then let men couple at once with
wolves.
What! art thou mad?'

But Pelleas, leaping up,
Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his
horse
And fled: small pity upon his horse had
he,
Or on himself, or any, and when he met
A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—
Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-
elm
That turns its back on the salt blast, the
boy
Paused not, but overrode him, shouting,
'False,
And false with Gawain!' and so left him
bruised
And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and
wood
Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
That follows on the turning of the world,
Darken'd the common path: he twitch'd
the reins,
And made his beast that better knew it,
swerve

Now off it and now on; but when he saw
High up in heaven the hall that Merlin
built,
Blackening against the dead-green stripes
of even,
'Black nest of rats,' he groan'd, 'ye build
too high.'

Not long thereafter from the city gates
Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
Warm with a gracious parting from the
Queen,
Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
And marvelling what it was: on whom
the boy,
Across the silent seeded meadow-grass
Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying,
'What name hast thou
That ridest here so blindly and so
hard?'
'No name, no name,' he shouted, 'a
scourge am I
To lash the treasons of the Table Round.'
'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many
names,' he cried:
'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil
fame,
And like a poisonous wind I pass to
blast
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the
Queen.'
'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt
thou pass.'
'Fight therefore,' yell'd the youth, and
either knight
Drew back a space, and when they closed,
at once
The weary steed of Pelleas floundering
flung
His rider, who call'd out from the dark
field,
'Thou art false as Hell: slay me: I have
no sword.'
Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips—
and sharp;
But here will I disedge it by thy death.'
'Slay then,' he shriek'd, 'my will is to be
slain,'
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the
fall'n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then
spake :
' Rise, weakling ; I am Lancelot ; say thy
say.'

And Lancelot slowly rode his warhorse
back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark
field,
And follow'd to the city. It chanced that
both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was
Guinevere.
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas,
him
Who had not greeted her, but cast him-
self
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. ' Have
ye fought ?'
She ask'd of Lancelot. ' Ay, my Queen,'
he said.
' And thou hast overthrown him ?' ' Ay,
my Queen.'
Then she, turning to Pelleas, ' O young
knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in
thee fail'd
So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from *him* !' Then, for he answer'd
not,
' Or hast thou other griefs ? If I, the
Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let
me know.'
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd ; and he, hissing ' I have no
sword,'
Sprang from the door into the dark.
The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her ;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to
be :
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey ;
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, ' The time is hard
at hand.'

THE LAST TOURNAMENT.

DAGONET, the fool, whom Gawain in his
mood
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table
Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing
woods,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
And toward him from the hall, with harp
in hand,
And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, ' Why skip ye
so, Sir Fool ?'

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak
half-dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven
snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag, and started thro'
mid air
Bearing an eagle's nest : and thro' the tree
Rush'd ever a rainy wind, and thro' the
wind
Pierced ever a child's cry : and crag and
tree
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous
nest,
This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscarr'd from beak or talon,
brought
A maiden babe ; which Arthur pitying
took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear : the
Queen
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling ; so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares ; till that young
life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal
cold
Past from her ; and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the
child :

So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
 'Take thou the jewels of this dead in-
 nocence,
 And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-
 prize.'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine
 eagle-borne
 Dead nestling, and this honour after
 death,
 Following thy will ! but, O my Queen,
 I muse
 Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or
 zone
 Those diamonds that I rescued from the
 tarn,
 And Lancelot won, methought, for thee
 to wear.'

'Would rather you had let them fall,'
 she cried,
 'Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they
 were,
 A bitterness to me !—ye look amazed,
 Not knowing they were lost as soon as
 given—
 Slid from my hands, when I was leaning
 out
 Above the river—that unhappy child
 Past in her barge : but rosier luck will go
 With these rich jewels, seeing that they
 came
 Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
 But the sweet body of a maiden babe.
 Perchance—who knows?—the purest of
 thy knights
 May win them for the purest of my maids.'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
 With trumpet-blowings ran on all the
 ways
 From Camelot in among the faded fields
 To furthest towers ; and everywhere the
 knights
 Arm'd for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn
 Into the hall stagger'd, his visage ribb'd
 From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his
 nose

Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand
 off,
 And one with shatter'd fingers dangling
 lame,
 A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what
 evil beast
 Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face ?
 or fiend ?
 Man was it who marr'd heaven's image
 in thee thus ?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of
 splinter'd teeth,
 Yet strangers to the tongue, and with
 blunt stump
 Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the
 maim'd churl,

'He took them and he drave them to
 his tower—
 Some hold he was a table-knight of thine—
 A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight,
 he—
 Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red
 Knight
 Brake in upon me and drave them to his
 tower ;
 And wher I call'd upon thy name as one
 That doest right by gentle and by churl,
 Maim'd me and maul'd, and would out-
 right have slain,
 Save that he sware me to a message,
 saying,
 "Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I
 Have founded my Round Table in the
 North,
 And whatsoever his own knights have
 sworn
 My knights have sworn the counter to
 it—and say
 My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
 But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
 To be none other than themselves—and say
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess
 To be none other ; and say his hour is come,
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance
 Broken, and his Excalibur a straw."

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the sene-
 schal,
 'Take thou my churl, and tend him
 curiously
 Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be
 whole.
 The heathen—but that ever-climbing
 wave,
 Hurl'd back again so often in empty foam,
 Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,
 Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion,
 whom
 The wholesome realm is purged of other-
 where,
 Friends, thro' your manhood and your
 fealty,—now
 Make their last head like Satan in the
 North.
 My younger knights, new-made, in whom
 your flower
 Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
 Move with me toward their quelling,
 which achieved,
 The loneliest ways are safe from shore to
 shore.
 But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
 Enchair'd to-morrow, arbitrate the field;
 For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle
 with it,
 Only to yield my Queen her own again?
 Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent: is it
 well?'

Thereto Sir Lancelot answer'd, 'It is
 well:
 Yet better if the King abide, and leave
 The leading of his younger knights to me.
 Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well.'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd
 him,
 And while they stood without the doors,
 the King
 Turn'd to him saying, 'Is it then so well?
 Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
 Of whom was written, "A sound is in his
 ears"?'
 The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the
 glance
 That only seems half-loyal to command,—

A manner somewhat fall'n from rever-
 ence—
 Or have I dream'd the bearing of our
 knights
 Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
 Or whence the fear lest this my realm,
 uprear'd,
 By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
 From flat confusion and brute violences,
 Reel back into the beast, and be no
 more?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger
 knights,
 Down the slope city rode, and sharply
 turn'd
 North by the gate. In her high bower
 the Queen,
 Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
 Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that
 she sigh'd.
 Then ran across her memory the strange
 rhyme
 Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who
 knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he
 goes.'

But when the morning of a tournament,
 By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
 The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
 Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
 Round whose sick head all night, like
 birds of prey,
 The words of Arthur flying shriek'd, arose,
 And down a streetway hung with folds of
 pure
 White samite, and by fountains running
 wine,
 Where children sat in white with cups of
 gold,
 Moved to the lists, and there, with slow
 sad steps
 Ascending, fill'd his double-dragon'd
 chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
 Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their
 Queen
 White-robed in honour of the stainless
 child,

And some with scatter'd jewels, like a
bank
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of
fire.
He look'd but once, and vail'd his eyes
again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a
dream

To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began :
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and
shorn plume

Went down it. Sighing weariedly, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests are past away,
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the
lists.

He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spake not ; once, a knight
cast down

Before his throne of arbitration cursed
The dead babe and the follies of the King ;
And once the laces of a helmet crack'd,
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
Modred, a narrow face : anon he heard
The voice that billow'd round the barriers
roar

An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly-enter'd, taller than the rest,
And armour'd all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
With ever-scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late
From overseas in Brittany return'd,
And marriage with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the
Woods—

Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime
with pain
His own against him, and now yearn'd to
shake

The burthen off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram ev'n to death : his strong
hands gript

And dinted the gilt dragons right and left,
Until he groan'd for wrath—so many of
those,

That ware their ladies' colours on the
casque,
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the
bounds,
And there with gibes and flickering
mockeries
Stood, while he mutter'd, ' Craven crests
O shame !
What faith have these in whom they swear
to love ?
The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave,
the gems,
Not speaking other word than ' Hast thou
won ?
Art thou the purest, brother ? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this, is red !' to
whom
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's
languorous mood,
Made answer, ' Ay, but wherefore toss
me this
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound ?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength
of heart
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand—belike the lance hath dript
upon it—
No blood of mine, I trow ; but O chief
knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the
world ;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.'

And Tristram round the gallery made
his horse
Caracole ; then bow'd his homage, bluntly
saying,
' Fair damsels, each to him who worships
each
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here.'
And most of these were mute, some anger'd,
one
Murmuring, ' All courtesy is dead,' and
one,
' The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and
 mantle clung,
 And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
 Went glooming down in wet and weariness :
 But under her black brows a swarthy one
 Laugh'd shrilly, crying, 'Praise the patient
 saints,
 Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
 Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt. So
 be it.
 The snowdrop only, flowering thro' the
 year,
 Would make the world as blank as
 Winter-tide.
 Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our
 Queen's
 And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity
 With all the kindlier colours of the field.'

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the
 feast
 Variously gay : for he that tells the tale
 Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of
 cold
 Falls on the mountain in midsummer
 snows,
 And all the purple slopes of mountain
 flowers
 Pass under white, till the warm hour
 returns
 With veer of wind, and all are flowers
 again ;
 So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
 And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
 Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy,
 glanced
 About the revels, and with mirth so loud
 Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the
 Queen,
 And wroth at Tristram and the lawless
 jousts,
 Brake up their sports, then slowly to her
 bower
 Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow
 morn,
 High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,
 Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.

Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so,
 Sir Fool ?'
 Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet
 replied,
 'Belike for lack of wiser company ;
 Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
 Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
 To know myself the wisest knight of all.'
 'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating
 dry
 To dance without a catch, a roundelay
 To dance to.' Then he twangled on his
 harp,
 And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
 Quiet as any water-sodden log
 Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook ;
 But when the twangling ended, skipt again ;
 And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir
 Fool ?'

Made answer, 'I had liefer twenty years
 Skip to the broken music of my brains
 Than any broken music thou canst make.'
 Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to
 come,
 'Good now, what music have I broken,
 fool ?'
 And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Arthur,
 the King's ;
 For when thou playest that air with Queen
 Isolt,
 Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
 Her daintier namesake down in Brittany—
 And so thou breakest Arthur's music too.'
 'Save for that broken music in thy brains,
 Sir fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break
 thy head.
 Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were
 o'er,
 The life had flown, we sware but by the
 shell—
 I am but a fool to reason with a fool—
 Come, thou art crabb'd and sour : but
 lean me down,
 Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,
 And harken if my music be not true.

' "Free love—free field—we love but
 while we may :
 The woods are hush'd, their music is no
 more :

The leaf is dead, the yearning past away :
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are
o'er :

New life, new love, to suit the newer day :
New loves are sweet as those that went
before :

Free love—free field—we love but while
we may."

'Ye might have moved slow-measure
to my tune,
Not stood stockstill. I made it in the
woods,
And heard it ring as true as tested gold.'

But Dagonet with one foot poised in
his hand,
'Friend, did ye mark that fountain
yesterday
Made to run wine?—but this had run
itself
All out like a long life to a sour end—
And them that round it sat with golden
cups
To hand the wine to whosoever came—
The twelve small damosels white as
Innocence,
In honour of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the
Queen
Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white
slips
Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon
I drank,
Spat — pish — the cup was gold, the
draught was mud.'

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than
thy gibes ?
Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock
thee, fool—
"Fear God : honour the King—his one
true knight—
Sole follower of the vows"—for here be
they
Who knew thee swineenow before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain : but when
the King

Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart ;
Which left thee less than fool, and less
than swine,

A naked aught—yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee
swine.'

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round
my neck

In lieu of hers, I'll hold thou hast some
touch

Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.
Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd
—the world

Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day.
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I
wash'd—

I have had my day and my philosophies—
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's
fool.

Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams
and geese

Troop'd round a Paynim harper once,
who thrumm'd

On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song—but never a king's
fool.'

And Tristram, 'Then were swine,
goats, asses, geese
The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard
Had such a mastery of his mystery
That he could harp his wife up out of hell.'

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of
his foot,

'And whither harp'st thou thine? down!
and thyself

Down! and two more : a helpful harper
thou,

That harpest downward! Dost thou know
the star

We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?'

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when
our King
Was victor wellnigh day by day, the
knights,

Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills, and in the signs of
heaven.'

And Dagonet answer'd, 'Ay, and when
the land

Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set
yourself

To babble about him, all to show your
wit—

And whether he were King by courtesy,
Or King by right—and so went harping
down

The black king's highway, got so far, and
grew

So witty that ye play'd at ducks and
drakes

With Arthur's vows on the great lake of
fire.

Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the
star?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in
open day.'

And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will: I see it
and hear.

It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip.' 'Lo, fool,' he said,
'ye talk

Fool's treason: is the King thy brother
fool?'

Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and
shrill'd,

'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of
fools!

Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-
combs,

And men from beasts—Long live the king
of fools!

And down the city Dagonet danced
away;

But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and
the west.

Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore

Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or perch'd,
or flew.

Anon the face, as, when a gust hath
blown,

Unruffling waters re-collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd;
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or ev'n a fall'n feather, vanish'd again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Thro' many a league-long bower he rode.
At length

A lodge of intertwined beechen-boughs
Furze-cramm'd, and bracken-rooft, the
which himself

Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden
grove

Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with
him:

Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish
King,

With six or seven, when Tristram was
away,

And snatch'd her thence; yet dreading
worse than shame

Her warrior Tristram, spake not any
word,

But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram
lookt

So sweet, that halting, in he past, and
sank

Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;
But could not rest for musing how to
smoothe

And sleek his marriage over to the Queen.
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all
The tonguesters of the court she had not
heard.

But then what folly had sent him overseas
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the King? 'Isolt
Of the white hands' they call'd her: the
sweet name

Allured him first, and then the maid herself,
 Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
 And loved him well, until himself had thought
 He loved her also, wedded easily,
 But left her all as easily, and return'd.
 The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
 Had drawn him home—what marvel?
 then he laid
 His brows upon the drifted leaf and dream'd.

He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany
 Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
 And show'd them both the ruby-chain,
 and both
 Began to struggle for it, till his Queen
 Graspt it so hard, that all her hand was red.
 Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand
 is red !
 These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
 And melts within her hand—her hand is hot
 With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
 Is all as cool and white as any flower.'
 Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then
 A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
 Because the twain had spoil'd her carcanet.

He dream'd ; but Arthur with a hundred spears
 Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
 And many a glancing splash and sallowy isle,
 The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh
 Glared on a huge machicolated tower
 That stood with open doors, whereout
 was roll'd
 A roar of riot, as from men secure
 Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease
 Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.
 'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth,
 for there,
 High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
 A goodly brother of the Table Round
 Swung by the neck : and on the boughs
 a shield

Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,
 And therebeside a horn, inflamed the knights
 At that dishonour done the gilded spur,
 Till each would clash the shield, and blow
 the horn.
 But Arthur waved them back. Alone he rode.
 Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,
 That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
 An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
 Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,
 Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
 In blood-red armour sallying, howl'd to
 the King,

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat !—
 Lo ! art thou not that eunuch-hearted King
 Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—
 The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's curse, and I !
 Slain was the brother of my paramour
 By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
 And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
 Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell,
 And stings itself to everlasting death,
 To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
 And tumbled. Art thou King?—Look to thy life !'

He ended : Arthur knew the voice ; the face
 Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name
 Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.
 And Arthur deign'd not use of word or sword,
 But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from horse
 To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
 Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching
 wave,
 Heard in dead night along that table-
 shore,
 Drops flat, and after the great waters
 break
 Whitening for half a league, and thin
 themselves,
 Far over sands marbled with moon and
 cloud,
 From less and less to nothing; thus he fell
 Head-heavy; then the knights, who
 watch'd him, roar'd
 And shouted and leapt down upon the
 fall'n;
 There trampled out his face from being
 known,
 And sank his head in mire, and slimed
 themselves:
 Nor heard the King for their own cries,
 but sprang
 Thro' open doors, and swording right and
 left
 Men, women, on their sodden faces,
 hurl'd
 The tables over and the wines, and slew
 Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,
 And all the pavement stream'd with
 massacre:
 Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired
 the tower,
 Which half that autumn night, like the
 live North,
 Red-pulsing up thro' Alioth and Alcor,
 Made all above it, and a hundred meres
 About it, as the water Moab saw
 Come round by the East, and out beyond
 them flush'd
 The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea.
 So all the ways were safe from shore to
 shore,
 But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord.
 Then, out of Tristram waking, the red
 dream
 Fled with a shout, and that low lodge
 return'd,
 Mid-forest, and the wind among the
 boughs.

He whistled his good warhorse left to
 graze
 Among the forestgreens, vaulted upon him,
 And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,
 Till one lone woman, weeping near a
 cross,
 Stay'd him. 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,'
 she said, 'my man
 Hath left me or is dead;' whereon he
 thought—
 'What, if she hate me now? I would
 not this.
 What, if she love me still? I would not
 that.
 I know not what I would'—but said to
 her,
 'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate
 return,
 He find thy favour changed and love thee
 not'—
 Then pressing day by day thro' Lyonesse
 Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard
 The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly
 hounds
 Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and
 gain'd
 Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,
 A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,
 A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair
 And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the
 Queen.
 And when she heard the feet of Tristram
 grind
 The spiring stone that scaled about her
 tower,
 Flush'd, started, met him at the doors,
 and there
 Belted his body with her white embrace,
 Crying aloud, 'Not Mark—not Mark,
 my soul!
 The footstep flutter'd me at first: not he:
 Catlike thro' his own castle steals my
 Mark,
 But warrior-wise thou stridest thro' his
 halls
 Who hates thee, as I him—ev'n to the
 death.
 My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark

Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh.'

To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am here.

Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine.'

And drawing somewhat backward she replied,

'Can he be wrong'd who is not ev'n his own,

But save for dread of thee had beaten me, Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, marr'd me somehow—Mark?

What rights are his that dare not strike for them?

Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me thus!

But harken! have ye met him? hence he went

To-day for three days' hunting—as he said—

And so returns belike within an hour.

Mark's way, my soul!—but eat not thou with Mark,

Because he hates thee even more than fears;

Nor drink: and when thou passest any wood

Close vizer, lest an arrow from the bush Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.

My God, the measure of my hate for Mark

Is as the measure of my love for thee.'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one by love,

Drain'd of her force, again she sat, and spake

To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying,

'O hunter, and O blower of the horn, Harper, and thou hast been a rover too, For, ere I mated with my shambling king, Ye twain had fallen out about the bride Of one—his name is out of me—the prize, If prize she were—(what marvel—she could see)—

Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks

To wreck thee villainously: but, O Sir Knight,
What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to last?'

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen Paramount,

Here now to my Queen Paramount of love And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when first

Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse, Sailing from Ireland.'

Softly laugh'd Isolt;

'Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen

My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said, 'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,

And thine is more to me—soft, gracious, kind—

Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips Most gracious; but she, haughty, ev'n to him,

Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow To make one doubt if ever the great Queen Have yielded him her love.'

To whom Isolt,

'Ah then, false hunter and false harper, thou

Who brakest thro' the scruple of my bond,

Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me

That Guinevere had sinn'd against the highest,

And I—mis-yoked with such a want of man—

That I could hardly sin against the lowest.'

He answer'd, 'O my soul, be comforted!

If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings, If here be comfort, and if ours be sin, Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning sin

That made us happy: but how ye greet me—fear

And fault and doubt—no word of that fond tale—

Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away.'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake

Isolt,

'I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour
by hour,

Here in the never-ended afternoon,
O sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seem'd those far-rolling, westward-
smiling seas,

Watch'd from this tower. Isolt of Britain
dash'd

Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss?
Wedded her?

Fought in her father's battles? wounded
there?

The King was all fulfill'd with grateful-
ness,

And she, my namesake of the hands, that
heal'd

Thy hurt and heart with unguent and
caress—

Well—can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast
thou left

To pine and waste in those sweet
memories.

O were I not my Mark's, by whom all
men

Are noble, I should hate thee more than
love.'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands,
replied,

'Grace, Queen, for being loved: she
loved me well.

Did I love her? the name at least I loved.
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!

The night was dark; the true star set.
Isolt!

The name was ruler of the dark——Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful,

meek,

Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to
God.'

And Isolt answer'd, 'Yea, and why
not I?

Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell
thee now.

Here one black, mute midsummer night
I sat,

Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering
where,

Murmuring a light song I had heard thee
sing,

And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.
Then flash'd a levin-brand; and near me
stood,

In fuming sulphur blue and green, a
fiend—

Mark's way to steal behind one in the
dark—

For there was Mark: "He has wedded
her," he said,

Not said, but hiss'd it: then this crown
of towers

So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,

And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
"I will flee hence and give myself to
God"—

And thou wert lying in thy new leman's
arms.'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her
hand,

'May God be with thee, sweet, when old
and gray,

And past desire!' a saying that anger'd
her.

"May God be with thee, sweet, when
thou art old,

And sweet no more to me!" I need
Him now.

For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so
gross

Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the
mast?

The greater man, the greater courtesy.
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's

knight!

But thou, thro' ever harrying thy wild
beasts—

Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance

Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast
thyself.

How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me far
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it,
unswear!

Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I
should suck

Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe.
Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye
kneel,

And solemnly as when ye sware to him,
The man of men, our King—My God,
the power

Was once in vows when men believed the
King!

They lied not then, who sware, and thro'
their vows

The King prevailing made his realm:—
I say,

Swear to me thou wilt love me ev'n when
old,

Gray-hair'd, and past desire, and in de-
spair.'

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and
down,

'Vows! did you keep the vow you made
to Mark

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay,
but learnt,

The vow that binds too strictly snaps
itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ay, being
snap't—

We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn. I swear no
more.

I swore to the great King, and am for-
sworn.

For once—ev'n to the height—I honour'd
him.

"Man, is he man at all?" methought,
when first

I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and
beheld

That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—

His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-
blue eyes,

The golden beard that clothed his lips
with light—

Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon; he seem'd to me no
man,

But Michaël trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed: but this went by—The
vows!

O ay—the wholesome madness of an
hour—

They served their use, their time; for
every knight

Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had
done,

And so the realm was made; but then
their vows—

First mainly thro' that sullying of our
Queen—

Began to gall the knighthood, asking
whence

Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up
from out the deep?

They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh
and blood

Of our old kings: whence then? a doubt-
ful lord

To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would
violate:

For feel this arm of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heather-scented
air,

Pulsing full man; can Arthur make me
pure

As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world
laughs at it.

And worldling of the world am I, and
know

The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour

Woos his own end ; we are not angels here
 Nor shall be : vows—I am woodman of
 the woods,
 And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
 Mock them : my soul, we love but while
 we may ;
 And therefore is my love so large for thee,
 Seeing it is not bounded save by love.'

Here ending, he moved toward her,
 and she said,
 ' Good : an I turn'd away my love for thee
 To some one thrice as courteous as thy-
 self—

For courtesy wins woman all as well
 As valour may, but he that closes both
 Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,
 Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
 This knightliest of all knights, and cast
 thee back
 Thine own small saw, "We love but
 while we may,"
 Well then, what answer ?'

He that while she spake,
 Mindful of what he brought to adorn her
 with,
 The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
 The warm white apple of her throat,
 replied,
 ' Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
 Come, I am hunger'd and half-anger'd—
 meat,
 Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the
 death,
 And out beyond into the dream to come.'

So then, when both were brought to
 full accord,
 She rose, and set before him all he will'd ;
 And after these had comforted the blood
 With meats and wines, and satiated their
 hearts—
 Now talking of their woodland paradise,
 The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts,
 the lawns ;
 Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
 And craven shifts, and long crane legs of
 Mark—
 Then Tristram laughing caught the harp,
 and sang :

' Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend
 the brier !
 A star in heaven, a star within the mere !
 Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
 And one was far apart, and one was near :
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the
 grass !
 And one was water and one star was fire,
 And one will ever shine and one will pass.
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the
 mere.'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tris-
 tram show'd
 And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,
 ' The collar of some Order, which our
 King
 Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
 For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy
 peers.'

' Not so, my Queen,' he said, ' but the
 red fruit
 Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,
 And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,
 And hither brought by Tristram for his
 last
 Love-offering and peace-offering unto
 thee.'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging
 round her neck,
 Claspt it, and cried ' Thine Order, O my
 Queen !'
 But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd
 throat,
 Out of the dark, just as the lips had
 touch'd,
 Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek—
 ' Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him
 thro' the brain.

That night came Arthur home, and
 while he climb'd,
 All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping
 gloom,
 The stairway to the hall, and look'd and
 saw
 The great Queen's bower was dark,—
 about his feet
 A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,

'What art thou?' and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

GUINEVERE.

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court,
and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,

Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall

To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best

Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wildest and the worst; and more than this

He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand

Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,

So from the high wall and the flowering grove

Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,

And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd with dust,

He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these Full knightly without scorn; for in those days

No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;

But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,

Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice

Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled,
and went:

But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd

Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries

'I shudder, some one steps across my grave;'

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye :
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
 To help it from the death that cannot die,
 And save it even in extremes, began
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
 That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
 Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
 An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land,
 and in it
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew;
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
 And trustful courtesies of household life,
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
 And if we meet again, some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
 Before the people, and our lord the King.'
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
 And still they met and met. Again she said,
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
 And then they were agreed upon a night
 (When the good King should not be there)
 to meet
 And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
 She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
 And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
 Low on the border of her couch they sat
 Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
 His creatures to the basement of the tower
 For testimony; and crying with full voice
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,'
 aroused
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong,
 and he fell
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
 And all was still: then she, 'The end is come,
 And I am shamed for ever;' and he said,
 'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
 And fly to my strong castle overseas:
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
 There hold thee with my life against the world.'
 She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
 Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,
 And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
 And then they rode to the divided way,
 There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for
 he past,
 Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
 Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
 Fled all night long by glimmering waste
 and weald,
 And heard the Spirits of the waste and
 weald
 Moan as she fled, or thought she heard
 them moan:
 And in herself she moan'd 'Too late, too
 late!'
 Till in the cold wind that foreruns the
 morn,
 A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
 Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a
 field of death;
 For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
 Lured by the crimes and frailties of the
 court,
 Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she
 spake
 There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine
 enemies
 Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
 Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
 Her name to whom ye yield it, till her
 time
 To tell you: and her beauty, grace and
 power,
 Wrought as a charm upon them, and
 they spared
 To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
 For many a week, unknown, among the
 nuns;
 Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,
 nor sought,
 Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for
 shrift,
 But communed only with the little maid,
 Who pleased her with a babbling heed-
 lessness
 Which often lured her from herself; but
 now,

This night, a rumour wildly blown about
 Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the
 realm,
 And leagued him with the heathen, while
 the King
 Was waging war on Lancelot: then she
 thought,
 'With what a hate the people and the
 King
 Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon
 her hands
 Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
 No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late! so
 late!
 What hour, I wonder, now?' and when
 she drew
 No answer, by and by began to hum
 An air the nuns had taught her; 'Late,
 so late!'
 Which when she heard, the Queen look'd
 up, and said,
 'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
 Sing, and unbind my heart that I may
 weep.'
 Whereat full willingly sang the little
 maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the
 night and chill!
 Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
 Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do
 repent;
 And learning this, the bridegroom will
 relent.
 Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill
 the night!
 O let us in, that we may find the light!
 Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is
 so sweet?
 O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
 No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passion-
 ately,
 Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept
the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice prattling to her,
‘O pray you, noble lady, weep no
more ;
But let my words, the words of one so
small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows ; for they do not
flow
From evil done ; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the
King’s,
And weighing find them less ; for gone is
he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot
there,
Round that strong castle where he holds
the Queen ;
And Modred whom he left in charge of
all,
The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King’s
grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and
realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of
ours.
For me, I thank the saints, I am not
great.
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done.
None knows it, and my tears have brought
me good :
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this
grief
Is added to the griefs the great must
bear,
That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a
cloud :
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked
Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be.’

Then to her own sad heart mutter’d the
Queen,
‘Will the child kill me with her innocent
talk ?’

But openly she answer’d, ‘Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the
realm ?’

‘Yea,’ said the maid, ‘this is all
woman’s grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table
Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years
ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders,
there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.’

Then thought the Queen within herself
again,
‘Will the child kill me with her foolish
prate ?’
But openly she spake and said to her,
‘O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and
Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the
signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery ?’

To whom the little novice garrulously,
‘Yea, but I know : the land was full of
signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it ;
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and
he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turn-
ing—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland
flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west :

And in the light the white mermaiden
 swam,
 And strong man-breasted things stood
 from the sea,
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the
 land,
 To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
 So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
 Next morning, while he past the dim-lit
 woods,
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with
 joy
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside
 flower,
 That shook beneath them, as the thistle
 shakes
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the
 seed :
 And still at evenings on before his horse
 The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, for all the land was full of life.
 And when at last he came to Camelot,
 A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the
 hall ;
 And in the hall itself was such a feast
 As never man had dream'd ; for every
 knight
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
 By hands unseen ; and even as he said
 Down in the cellars merry bloated things
 Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the
 butts
 While the wine ran : so glad were spirits
 and men
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat
 bitterly,
 'Were they so glad? ill prophets were
 they all,
 Spirits and men: could none of them
 foresee,
 Not even thy wise father with his signs
 And wonders, what has fall'n upon the
 realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again,
 'Yea, one, a bard ; of whom my father
 said,
 Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
 Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
 Between the steep cliff and the coming
 wave ;
 And many a mystic lay of life and death
 Had chanted on the smoky mountain-
 tops,
 When round him bent the spirits of the
 hills
 With all their dewy hair blown back like
 flame :
 So said my father—and that night the bard
 Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang
 the King
 As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at
 those
 Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois :
 For there was no man knew from whence
 he came ;
 But after tempest, when the long wave
 broke
 All down the thundering shores of Bud
 and Bos,
 There came a day as still as heaven, and
 then
 They found a naked child upon the sands
 Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea ;
 And that was Arthur ; and they foster'd
 him
 Till he by miracle was approven King :
 And that his grave should be a mystery
 From all men, like his birth ; and could
 he find
 A woman in her womanhood as great
 As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
 The twain together well might change the
 world.
 But even in the middle of his song
 He falter'd, and his hand fell from the
 harp,
 And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would
 have fall'n,
 But that they stay'd him up ; nor would
 he tell
 His vision ; but what doubt that he fore-
 saw
 This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they
 have set her on,
 Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
 To play upon me,' and bow'd her head
 nor spake.
 Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd
 hands,
 Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
 Said the good nuns would check her
 gadding tongue
 Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
 To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
 Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
 Which my good father told me, check
 me too
 Nor let me shame my father's memory,
 one
 Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
 Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he
 died,
 Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers
 back,
 And left me; but of others who remain,
 And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
 And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
 But pray you, which had noblest, while
 you moved
 Among them, Lancelot or our lord the
 King?'

Then the pale Queen look'd up and
 answer'd her,
 'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
 Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
 In open battle or the tilting-field
 Forbore his own advantage, and the King
 In open battle or the tilting-field
 Forbore his own advantage, and these
 two
 Were the most nobly-manner'd men of
 all;
 For manners are not idle, but the fruit
 Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such
 fair fruit?
 Then Lancelot's needs must be a thou-
 sand-fold
 Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
 The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the
 Queen:
 'O closed about by narrowing nunnery-
 walls,
 What knowest thou of the world, and all
 its lights
 And shadows, all the wealth and all the
 woe?
 If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
 Were for one hour less noble than himself,
 Pray for him that he scape the doom of
 fire,
 And weep for her who drew him to his
 doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for
 both;
 But I should all as soon believe that his,
 Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
 As I could think, sweet lady, yours
 would be
 Such as they are, were you the sinful
 Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
 Whom she would soothe, and harm'd
 where she would heal;
 For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
 Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who
 cried,

'Such as thou art be never maiden more
 For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
 And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
 And traitress.' When that storm of anger
 brake

From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
 White as her veil, and stood before the
 Queen

As tremulously as foam upon the beach
 Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
 And when the Queen had added 'Get
 thee hence,'

Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
 Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
 Saying in herself, 'The simple, fearful
 child

Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful
 guilt,

Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
 But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.

For what is true repentance but in
thought—

Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant
to us :

And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot
came,

Reputed the best knight and goodliest
man,

Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the
time

Was maytime, and as yet no sin was
dream'd,)

Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro'
the earth,

And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before ; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they
saw

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the
King,

Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such
a trance,

And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw
the King

Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to
find

Her journey done, glanced at him, thought
him cold,

High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not
like him,

'Not like my Lancelot'—while she
brooded thus

And grew half-guilty in her thoughts
again,

There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery
ran,

Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King.'
She sat

Stiff-stricken, listening ; but when armed
feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she
fell,

And grovell'd with her face against the
floor :

There with her milkwhite arms and
shadowy hair

She made her face a darkness from the
King :

And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her ; then came silence, then a
voice,

Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed,
the King's :

'Liest thou here so low, the child of
one

I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.

The children born of thee are sword and
fire,

Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern

Sea ;

Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right
arm

The mightiest of my knights, abode with
me,

Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.

And knowest thou now from whence I
come—from him,

From waging bitter war with him : and
he,

That did not shun to smite me in worse
way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,

He spared to lift his hand against the King
 Who made him knight: but many a
 knight was slain;
 And many more, and all his kith and kin
 Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
 And many more when Modred raised
 revolt,
 Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
 To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
 And of this remnant will I leave a part,
 True men who love me still, for whom I
 live,
 To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
 Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
 Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my
 death.
 Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
 Have err'd not, that I march to meet my
 doom.
 Thou hast not made my life so sweet to
 me,
 That I the King should greatly care to
 live;
 For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
 Bear with me for the last time while I
 show,
 Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast
 sinn'd.
 For when the Roman left us, and their law
 Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
 Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a
 deed
 Of prowess done redress'd a random
 wrong.
 But I was first of all the kings who drew
 The knighthood-errant of this realm and
 all
 The realms together under me, their
 Head,
 In that fair Order of my Table Round,
 A glorious company, the flower of men,
 To serve as model for the mighty world,
 And be the fair beginning of a time.
 I made them lay their hands in mine and
 swear
 To reverence the King, as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as
 their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the
 Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To honour his own word as if his God's,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew
 Of no more subtle master under heaven
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
 Not only to keep down the base in man,
 But teach high thought, and amiable
 words
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
 And love of truth, and all that makes a
 man.
 And all this throve before I wedded thee,
 Believing, "lo mine helpmate, one to feel
 My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."
 Then came thy shameful sin with Lance-
 lot;
 Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
 Then others, following these my mightiest
 knights,
 And drawing foul ensample from fair
 names,
 Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
 Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
 And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
 I guard as God's high gift from scathe
 and wrong,
 Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
 How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
 To sit once more within his lonely hall,
 And miss the wonted number of my
 knights,
 And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
 As in the golden days before thy sin.
 For which of us, who might be left, could
 speak
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at
 thee?
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
 Thy shadow still would glide from room
 to room,
 And I should evermore be vexed with thee
 In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
 Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
 For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love
 thy lord,
 Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.

I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy
shame.

I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the
wife

Whom he knows false, abide and rule the
house :

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the
pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the
young.

Worst of the worst were that man he that
reigns !

Better the King's waste hearth and aching
heart

Than thou reseatd in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their
bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept
an inch

Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse
neigh'd

As at a friend's voice, and he spake again :

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy
crimes,

I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on
that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming
death,

(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is
past.

The pang—which while I weigh'd thy
heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in
part.

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives : do thou for thine own soul the
rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved ?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing ! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with
thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's : nay, they never were the
King's.

I cannot take thy hand ; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd ; and
mine own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I loathe thee : " yet not less, O Guine-
vere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my
life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine,
and know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me
that,

I charge thee, my last hope. Now must
I hence.

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet
blow :

They summon me their King to lead mine
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,
and knights,

Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet
myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious
doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the
event ;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side ; see thee no more—
Farewell !’

And while she grovell’d at his feet,
She felt the King’s breath wander o’er her
neck,
And in the darkness o’er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that
blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps
were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish
found
The casement : ‘peradventure,’ so she
thought,
‘If I might see his face, and not be seen.’
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door !
And near him the sad nuns with each a
light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the
Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was
lower’d,
To which for crest the golden dragon
clung
Of Britain ; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel’s, but she
saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the
lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of
fire.
And even then he turn’d ; and more and
more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem’d the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him
gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch’d out her arms and
cried aloud
‘Oh Arthur !’ there her voice brake
suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a
cliff
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the
vale—
Went on in passionate utterance :

‘Gone—my lord !
Gone thro’ my sin to slay and to be slain !
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell ? I should have answer’d his
farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord
the King,
My own true lord ! how dare I call him
mine ?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution : he, the
King,
Call’d me polluted : shall I kill myself ?
What help in that ? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul ; nor can I kill my shame ;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks
to months,
The months will add themselves and make
the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be ; that is but of the world
What else ? what hope ? I think there was
a hope,
Except he mock’d me when he spake of
hope ;
His hope he call’d it ; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath for-
given
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down
sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah great and gentle
lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint

Among his warring senses, to thy
knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that
took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the
height
To which I would not or I could not
climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine
air
That pure severity of perfect light—
I yearn'd for warmth and colour which I
found
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou
art,
Thou art the highest and most human
too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there
none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle?
none :
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my
God,
What might I not have made of thy fair
world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature
here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest :
It surely was my profit had I known :
It would have been my pleasure had I
seen.
We needs must love the highest when we
see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand
Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes : she
look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said
to her,
'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping ; and her heart
was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and
said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one,
who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-
walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying
"shame."
I must not scorn myself : he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me
still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with
you ;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like
you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with
your feasts ;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at
your joys,
But not rejoicing ; mingle with your rites ;
Pray and be pray'd for ; lie before your
shrines ;
Do each low office of your holy house ;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I :
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal
mine own ;
And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the
King.'

She said : they took her to themselves ;
and she
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late ?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess
died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her
pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had
borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess,
lived
For three brief years, and there, an
Abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is
peace.

End of 'The Round Table.'

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the
knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a
voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other
minds.

For on their march to westward,
Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering
host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the
King :

‘ I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark’d Him in the flowering of His
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful ?

Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and
dim,

And have not power to see it as it is :
Perchance, because we see not to the
close ;—

For I, being simple, thought to work His
will,

And have but stricken with the sword in
vain ;

And all whereon I lean’d in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my
death :

Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall
not die.’

Then, ere that last weird battle in the
west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain
kill’d

In Lancelot’s war, the ghost of Gawain
blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, ‘ Hollow, hollow all
delight !

Hail, King ! to-morrow thou shalt pass
away.

Farewell ! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering
wind,

And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.’
And fainter onward, like wild birds that
change

Their season in the night and wail their
way

From cloud to cloud, down the long wind
the dream

Shrill’d ; but in going mingled with dim
cries

Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack’d by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with
wail

Pass to new lords ; and Arthur woke and
call’d,

‘ Who spake ? A dream. O light upon
the wind,

Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these
dim cries

Thine ? or doth all that haunts the waste
and wild

Mourn, knowing it will go along with me ?’

• This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and
spake :

‘ O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the
field ;

But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever : but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in
death

Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man ;
And care not thou for dreams from him,
but rise—

I hear the steps of Modred in the west,

And with him many of thy people, and
 knights
 Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but
 grosser grown
 Than heathen, spitting at their vows and
 thee.
 Right well in heart they know thee for
 the King.
 Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
 vere :
 'Far other is this battle in the west
 Whereto we move, than when we strove
 in youth,
 And brake the petty kings, and fought
 with Rome,
 Or thrust the heathen from the Roman
 wall,
 And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom
 is mine
 To war against my people and my knights.
 The king who fights his people fights
 himself.
 And they my knights, who loved me once,
 the stroke
 That strikes them dead is as my death to
 me.
 Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
 Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I
 saw
 One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
 Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host
 by night,
 And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by
 league,
 Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
 A land of old upheaven from the abyss
 By fire, to sink into the abyss again ;
 Where fragments of forgotten peoples
 dwelt,
 And the long mountains ended in a coast
 Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
 The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
 There the pursuer could pursue no more,
 And he that fled no further fly the King ;
 And there, that day when the great light
 of heaven

Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
 On the waste sand by the waste sea they
 closed.
 Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the
 west.
 A deathwhite mist slept over sand and
 sea :
 Whereof the chill, to him who breathed
 it, drew
 Down with his blood, till all his heart was
 cold
 With formless fear ; and ev'n on Arthur
 fell
 Confusion, since he saw not whom he
 fought.
 For friend and foe were shadows in the
 mist,
 And friend slew friend not knowing whom
 he slew ;
 And some had visions out of golden
 youth,
 And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
 Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,
 And chance and craft and strength in
 single fights,
 And ever and anon with host to host
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the
 hard mail hewn,
 Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands,
 the crash
 Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and
 shrieks
 After the Christ, of those who falling down
 Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the
 mist ;
 And shouts of heathen and the traitor
 knights,
 Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-
 phemies,
 Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of
 the lungs
 In that close mist, and cryings for the
 light,
 Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.
 Last, as by some one deathbed after
 wail
 Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death

Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,

Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell ; but when the dolorous day

Grew drearier toward twilight falling,
came

A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew

The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field

Of battle : but no man was moving there ;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen ; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down

Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,

And shiver'd brands that once had fought
with Rome,

And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,

And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King :

‘Hearest thou this great voice that
shakes the world,

And wastes the narrow realm whereon we
move,

And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me ?—

O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.’

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘My King,

King everywhere ! and so the dead have
kings,

There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee ; but who hates thee, he
that brought

The heathen back among us, yonder
stands,
Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine
house.’

Then spake the King : ‘My house hath
been my doom.

But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.

My house are rather they who swear my
vows,

Yea, even while they brake them, own'd
me King.

And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath
fail'd,

That quick or dead thou holdest me for
King.

King am I, whatsoever be their cry ;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou
see

Yet, ere I pass.’ And uttering this the
King

Made at the man : then Modred smote
his liege

Hard on that helm which many a heathen
sword

Had beaten thin ; while Arthur at one
blow,

Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound
was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land :
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

‘The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record. Such
 a sleep
 They sleep—the men I loved. I think
 that we
 Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly
 deeds,
 Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
 I perish by this people which I made,—
 Tho' Merlin sware that I should come
 again
 To rule once more ; but, let what will be,
 be,
 I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
 That without help I cannot last till morn.
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
 Which was my pride : for thou remem-
 berest how
 In those old days, one summer noon, an
 arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
 derful,
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd
 across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known :
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
 me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
 thus,
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the
 helm—
 A little thing may harm a wounded man ;
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
 word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
 stept,
 And in the moon athwart the place of
 tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
 men,

Old knights, and over them the sea-wind
 sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He,
 stepping down
 By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excali-
 bur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
 moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,
 ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the
 hilt :
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond
 sparks,
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled as he
 stood,
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,
 In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
 There in the many-knotted waterflags,
 That whistled stiff and dry about the
 marge.
 So strode he back slow to the wounded
 King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
 vere :
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
 I gave?
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
 heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
 vere :
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint
 and pale :
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
 name,
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
 Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
 Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in
thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud :

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the
earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men.
What good should follow this, if this were
done ?
What harm, undone ? Deep harm to
disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king
demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The King is sick, and knows not what
he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt ? But were this
kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty
kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, " King Arthur's sword, Excali-
bur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the
Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deep
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the after-
time
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame
were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily :
'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast
heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere :
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath :
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what
thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious
hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd
the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The
great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,
And flashing round and round, and
whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
 thicker breath :
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
 Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or
 seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
 gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never
 saw,
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
 ing him ;
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-
 ful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and
 brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the
 mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
 ing hard :
 'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I
 were gone.
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
 weight,
 And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
 die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half
 rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found
 not words ;
 Then took with care, and kneeling on
 one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
 hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of
 tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
 hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd
 the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
 'Quick, quick !
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
 ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
 he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like
 a goad.
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and
 right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him,
 as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
 heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
 barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them ; and descending they were
 ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately
 forms,
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream
 —by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold : and
 from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
 All night in a waste land, where no one
 comes,
 Or hath come, since the making of the
 world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in
 the barge.'
 So to the barge they came. There those
 three Queens
 Put forth their hands, and took the King,
 and wept.
 But she, that rose the tallest of them all
 And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and
 chafed his hands,
 And call'd him by his name, complaining
 loud,
 And dropping bitter tears against a brow
 Striped with dark blood : for all his face
 was white
 And colourless, and like the wither'd
 moon
 Smote by the fresh beam of the spring-
 ing east ;
 And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with
 drops
 Of onset ; and the light and lustrous
 curls—
 That made his forehead like a rising sun
 High from the dais-throne—were parch'd
 with dust ;
 Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
 Mix'd with the knightly growth that
 fringed his lips.
 So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
 Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
 rest,
 From spur to plume a star of tournament,
 Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and
 charged
 Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir
 Bedivere :
 ' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
 Where shall I hide my forehead and my
 eyes ?
 For now I see the true old times are
 dead,

When every morning brought a noble
 chance,
 And every chance brought out a noble
 knight.
 Such times have been not since the light
 that led
 The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole Round Table is dis-
 solved
 Which was an image of the mighty world,
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the
 years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other
 minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
 barge :
 ' The old order changeth, yielding place
 to new,
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the
 world.
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I
 have done
 May He within himself make pure ! but
 thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are
 wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore,
 let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
 prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call
 them friend ?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of
 God.
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go
 (For all my mind is clouded with a
 doubt)—
 To the island-valley of Avilion ;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies

Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard
lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-
breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir
Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of
dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for ever-
more,
The stillness of the dead world's winter
dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King
is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird
rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep
he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly
clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron
crag ;

Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,
and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again ; but—if he come no
more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black
boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three
whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with
living light,
They stood before his throne in silence,
friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need ?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there
came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about
and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and
saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare
the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new
year.

TO THE QUEEN.

O LOYAL to the royal in thyself,
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—
Bear witness, that rememberable day,
When, pale as yet, and fever-worn, the
Prince
Who scarce had pluck'd his flickering life
again
From halfway down the shadow of the
grave,
Past with thee thro' thy people and their
love,

And London roll'd one tide of joy thro'
all
Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of
man
And welcome ! witness, too, the silent cry,
The prayer of many a race and creed,
and clime—
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
And that true North, whereof we lately
heard

A strain to shame us 'keep you to yourselves ;

So loyal is too costly ! friends—your love
Is but a burthen : loose the bond, and go.'
Is this the tone of empire ? here the faith
That made us rulers ? this, indeed, her
voice

And meaning, whom the roar of Hougou-
mont

Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven ?
What shock has fool'd her since, that she
should speak

So feebly ? wealthier—wealthier—hour
by hour !

The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,
Some third-rate isle half-lost among her
seas ?

There rang her voice, when the full city
peal'd

Thee and thy Prince ! The loyal to their
crown

Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
Our ocean-empire with her boundless
homes

For ever-broadening England, and her
throne

In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
That knows not her own greatness : if
she knows

And dreads it we are fall'n.——But thou,
my Queen,

Not for itself, but thro' thy living love
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war
with Soul,

Ideal manhood closed in real man,
Rather than that gray king, whose name,
a ghost,

Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from
mountain peak,

And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still ;
or him

Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's,
one

Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wanton-
ness,

And crownings and dethronements : take
withal

Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that
Heaven

Will blow the tempest in the distance back
From thine and ours : for some are scared,
who mark,

Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm,
Waverings of every vane with every wind,
And wordy trucklings to the transient
hour,

And fierce or careless looseners of the
faith,

And Softness breeding scorn of simple
life,

Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,
Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice,
Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from
France,

And that which knows, but careful for
itself,

And that which knows not, ruling that
which knows

To its own harm : the goal of this great
world

Lies beyond sight : yet—if our slowly-
grown

And crown'd Republic's crowning com-
mon-sense,

That saved her many times, not fail—
their fears

Are morning shadows huger than the
shapes

That cast them, not those gloomier which
forego

The darkness of that battle in the West,
Where all of high and holy dies away.

THE LOVER'S TALE.

THE original Preface to 'The Lover's Tale' states that it was composed in my nineteenth year. Two only of the three parts then written were printed, when, feeling the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press. One of my friends however who, boylike, admired the boy's work, distributed among our common associates of that hour some copies of these two parts, without my knowledge, without the omissions and amendments which I had in contemplation, and marred by the many misprints of the compositor. Seeing that these two parts have of late been mercilessly pirated, and that what I had deemed scarce worthy to live is not allowed to die, may I not be pardoned if I suffer the whole poem at last to come into the light—accompanied with a reprint of the sequel—a work of my mature life—'The Golden Supper'?

May 1879.

ARGUMENT.

JULIAN, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavours to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel. He speaks (in Parts II. and III.) of having been haunted by visions and the sound of bells, tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.

I.

HERE far away, seen from the topmost cliff,

Filling with purple gloom the vacancies
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas
Hung in mid-heaven, and half-way down
rare sails,

White as white clouds, floated from sky
to sky.

Oh! pleasant breast of waters, quiet bay,
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,
Where the chafed breakers of the outer
sea

Sank powerless, as anger falls aside
And withers on the breast of peaceful love;
Thou didst receive the growth of pines
that fledged

The hills that watch'd thee, as Love
watcheth Love,

In thine own essence, and delight thyself
To make it wholly thine on sunny days.
Keep thou thy name of 'Lover's Bay.'

See, sirs,

Even now the Goddess of the Past, that
takes

The heart, and sometimes touches but
one string

That quivers, and is silent, and sometimes
Sweeps suddenly all its half-moulder'd
chords

To some old melody, begins to play

That air which pleased her first. I feel
thy breath;

I come, great Mistress of the ear and eye:
Thy breath is of the pinewood; and tho'
years

Have hollow'd out a deep and stormy
strait

Betwixt the native land of Love and me,
Breathe but a little on me, and the sail
Will draw me to the rising of the sun,
The lucid chambers of the morning star,
And East of Life.

Permit me, friend, I prythee,
To pass my hand across my brows, and
muse

On those dear hills, that never more will
meet

The sight that throbs and aches beneath
my touch,

As tho' there beat a heart in either eye;
For when the outer lights are darken'd
thus,

The memory's vision hath a keener edge.
It grows upon me now—the semicircle
Of dark-blue waters and the narrow fringe
Of curving beach—its wreaths of dripping
green—

Its pale pink shells—the summerhouse
aloft

That open'd on the pines with doors of
glass,

A mountain nest—the pleasure-boat that
 rock'd,
 Light-green with its own shadow, keel to
 keel,
 Upon the dappled dimplings of the wave,
 That blanch'd upon its side.

O Love, O Hope !

They come, they crowd upon me all at
 once—
 Moved from the cloud of unforgotten
 things,
 That sometimes on the horizon of the
 mind
 Lies folded, often sweeps athwart in
 storm—
 Flash upon flash they lighten thro' me—
 days
 Of dewy dawning and the amber eves
 When thou and I, Camilla, thou and I
 Were borne about the bay or safely
 moor'd
 Beneath a low-brow'd cavern, where the
 tide
 Plash'd, sapping its worn ribs ; and all
 without
 The slowly-ridging rollers on the cliffs
 Clash'd, calling to each other, and thro'
 the arch
 Down those loud waters, like a setting
 star,
 Mixt with the gorgeous west the light-
 house shone,
 And silver-smiling Venus ere she fell
 Would often loiter in her balmy blue,
 To crown it with herself.

Here, too, my love

Waver'd at anchor with me, when day
 hung
 From his mid-dome in Heaven's airy
 halls ;
 Gleams of the water-circles as they broke,
 Flicker'd like doubtful smiles about her
 lips,
 Quiver'd a flying glory on her hair,
 Leapt like a passing thought across her
 eyes ;
 And mine with one that will not pass,
 till earth

And heaven pass too, dwelt on my heaven,
 a face
 Most starry-fair, but kindled from within
 As 'twere with dawn. She was dark-
 hair'd, dark-eyed :
 Oh, such dark eyes ! a single glance of
 them
 Will govern a whole life from birth to
 death,
 Careless of all things else, led on with light
 In trances and in visions : look at them,
 You lose yourself in utter ignorance ;
 You cannot find their depth ; for they go
 back,
 And farther back, and still withdraw
 themselves
 Quite into the deep soul, that evermore
 Fresh springing from her fountains in the
 brain,
 Still pouring thro', floods with redundant
 life
 Her narrow portals.

Trust me, long ago

I should have died, if it were possible
 To die in gazing on that perfectness
 Which I do bear within me : I had died,
 But from my farthest lapse, my latest ebb,
 Thine image, like a charm of light and
 strength
 Upon the waters, push'd me back again
 On these deserted sands of barren life.
 Tho' from the deep vault where the heart
 of Hope
 Fell into dust, and crumbled in the dark—
 Forgetting how to render beautiful
 Her countenance with quick and health-
 ful blood—
 Thou didst not sway me upward ; could
 I perish
 While thou, a meteor of the sepulchre,
 Didst swathe thyself all round Hope's
 quiet urn
 For ever ? He, that saith it, hath o'er-
 stept
 The slippery footing of his narrow wit,
 And fall'n away from judgment. Thou
 art light,
 To which my spirit leaneth all her flowers,
 And length of days, and immortality

Of thought, and freshness ever self-renew'd.

For Time and Grief abode too long with Life,

And, like all other friends i' the world, at last

They grew weary of her fellowship :
So Time and Grief did beckon unto Death,

And Death drew nigh and beat the doors of Life ;

But thou didst sit alone in the inner house,
A wakeful portress, and didst parle with Death,—

'This is a charmed dwelling which I hold ;'

So Death gave back, and would no further come.

Yet is my life nor in the present time,
Nor in the present place. To me alone,
Push'd from his chair of regal heritage,
The Present is the vassal of the Past :
So that, in that I *have* lived, do I live,
And cannot die, and am, in having been—
A portion of the pleasant yesterday,
Thrust forward on to-day and out of place ;

A body journeying onward, sick with toil,

The weight as if of age upon my limbs,
The grasp of hopeless grief about my heart,

And all the senses weaken'd, save in that,
Which long ago they had glean'd and garner'd up

Into the granaries of memory—

The clear brow, bulwark of the precious brain,

Chink'd as you see, and seam'd—and all the while

The light soul twines and mingles with the growths

Of vigorous early days, attracted, won,
Married, made one with, molten into all
The beautiful in Past of act or place,
And like the all-enduring camel, driven
Far from the diamond fountain by the palms,

Who toils across the middle moonlit nights,

Or when the white heats of the blinding noons

Beat from the concave sand ; yet in him keeps

A draught of that sweet fountain that he loves,

To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit
From bitterness of death.

Ye ask me, friends,
When I began to love. How should I tell you ?

Or from the after-fulness of my heart,
Flow back again unto my slender spring
And first of love, tho' every turn and depth

Between is clearer in my life than all
Its present flow. Ye know not what ye ask.

How should the broad and open flower tell

What sort of bud it was, when, prest together

In its green sheath, close-lapt in silken folds,

It seem'd to keep its sweetness to itself,
Yet was not the less sweet for that it seem'd ?

For young Life knows not when young Life was born,

But takes it all for granted : neither Love,
Warm in the heart, his cradle, can remember

Love in the womb, but resteth satisfied,
Looking on her that brought him to the light :

Or as men know not when they fall asleep
Into delicious dreams, our other life,
So know I not when I began to love.

This is my sum of knowledge—that my love

Grew with myself—say rather, was my growth,

My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,
My outward circling air wherewith I breathe,

Which yet upholds my life, and evermore
Is to me daily life and daily death :
For how should I have lived and not have loved ?

Can ye take off the sweetness from the
 flower,
 The colour and the sweetness from the
 rose,
 And place them by themselves; or set
 apart
 Their motions and their brightness from
 the stars,
 And then point out the flower or the star?
 Or build a wall betwixt my life and love,
 And tell me where I am? 'Tis even
 thus:
 In that I live I love; because I love
 I live: whate'er is fountain to the one
 Is fountain to the other; and whene'er
 Our God unknits the riddle of the one,
 There is no shade or fold of mystery
 Swathing the other.

Many, many years,
 (For they seem many and my most of life,
 And well I could have linger'd in that
 porch,
 So unproportion'd to the dwelling-place,)
 In the Maydews of childhood, opposite
 The flush and dawn of youth, we lived
 together,
 Apart, alone together on those hills.

Before he saw my day my father died,
 And he was happy that he saw it not;
 But I and the first daisy on his grave
 From the same clay came into light at
 once.

As Love and I do number equal years,
 So she, my love, is of an age with me.
 How like each other was the birth of
 each!

On the same morning, almost the same
 hour,

Under the selfsame aspect of the stars,
 (Oh falsehood of all starcraft!) we were
 born.

How like each other was the birth of each!
 The sister of my mother—she that bore
 Camilla close beneath her beating heart,
 Which to the imprison'd spirit of the child,
 With its true-touched pulses in the flow
 And hourly visitation of the blood,
 Sent notes of preparation manifold,

And mellow'd echoes of the outer world—
 My mother's sister, mother of my love,
 Who had a twofold claim upon my heart,
 One twofold mightier than the other was,
 In giving so much beauty to the world,
 And so much wealth as God had charged
 her with—

Loathing to put it from herself for ever,
 Left her own life with it; and dying thus,
 Crown'd with her highest act the placid
 face

And breathless body of her good deeds
 past.

So were we born, so orphan'd. She
 was motherless

And I without a father. So from each
 Of those two pillars which from earth
 uphold

Our childhood, one had fallen away, and
 all

The careful burthen of our tender years
 Trembled upon the other. He that gave
 Her life, to me delightedly fulfill'd
 All lovingkindnesses, all offices
 Of watchful care and trembling tender-
 ness.

He waked for both: he pray'd for both:
 he slept

Dreaming of both: nor was his love the
 less

Because it was divided, and shot forth
 Boughs on each side, laden with whole-
 some shade,

Wherein we nested sleeping or awake,
 And sang aloud the matin-song of life.

She was my foster-sister: on one arm
 The flaxen ringlets of our infancies
 Wander'd, the while we rested: one soft
 lap

Pillow'd us both: a common light of eyes
 Was on us as we lay: our baby lips,
 Kissing one bosom, ever drew from thence
 The stream of life, one stream, one life,
 one blood,

One sustenance, which, still as thought
 grew large,
 Still larger moulding all the house of
 thought,

Made all our tastes and fancies like,
perhaps—

All—all but one; and strange to me,
and sweet,

Sweet thro' strange years to know that
whatsoe'er

Our general mother meant for me alone,
Our mutual mother dealt to both of us :
So what was earliest mine in earliest life,
I shared with her in whom myself remains.

As was our childhood, so our infancy,
They tell me, was a very miracle
Of fellow-feeling and communion.

They tell me that we would not be alone,—
We cried when we were parted; when I
wept,

Her smile lit up the rainbow on my tears,
Stay'd on the cloud of sorrow; that we
loved

The sound of one-another's voices more
Than the gray cuckoo loves his name, and
learn'd

To lisp in tune together; that we slept
In the same cradle always, face to face.
Heart beating time to heart, lip pressing
lip,

Folding each other, breathing on each
other,

Dreaming together (dreaming of each
other

They should have added), till the morning
light

Sloped thro' the pines, upon the dewy
pane

Falling, unseal'd our eyelids, and we woke
To gaze upon each other. If this be
true,

At thought of which my whole soul
languishes

And faints, and hath no pulse, no breath
—as tho'

A man in some still garden should infuse
Rich atar in the bosom of the rose,
Till, drunk with its own wine, and over-
full

Of sweetness, and in smelling of itself,
It fall on its own thorns—if this be true—
And that way my wish leads me evermore
Still to believe it—'tis so sweet a thought,
Why in the utter stillness of the soul

Doth question'd memory answer not, nor
tell

Of this our earliest, our closest-drawn,
Most loveliest, earthly-heavenliest har-
mony?

O blossom'd portal of the lonely house,
Green prelude, April promise, glad new-
year

Of Being, which with earliest violets
And lavish carol of clear-throated larks
Fill'd all the March of life!—I will not
speak of thee,

These have not seen thee, these can never
know thee,

They cannot understand me. Pass we
then

A term of eighteen years. Ye would but
laugh,

If I should tell you how I hoard in
thought

The faded rhymes and scraps of ancient
croncs,

Gray relics of the nurseries of the world,
Which are as gems set in my memory,
Because she learnt them with me; or
what use

To know her father left us just before
The daffodil was blown? or how we
found

The dead man cast upon the shore? All
this

Seems to the quiet daylight of your minds
But cloud and smoke, and in the dark of
mine

Is traced with flame. Move with me to
the event.

There came a glorious morning, such a
one

As dawns but once a season. Mercury
On such a morning would have flung
himself

From cloud to cloud, and swum with
balanced wings

To some tall mountain: when I said to
her,

'A day for Gods to stoop,' she answered,
'Ay,

And men to soar:' for as that other
gazed,

Shading his eyes till all the fiery cloud,

The prophet and the chariot and the
 steeds,
 Suck'd into oneness like a little star
 Were drunk into the inmost blue, we
 stood,
 When first we came from out the pines at
 noon,
 With hands for eaves, uplooking and
 almost
 Waiting to see some blessed shape in
 heaven,
 So bathed we were in brilliance. Never
 yet
 Before or after have I known the spring
 Pour with such sudden deluges of light
 Into the middle summer ; for that day
 Love, rising, shook his wings, and charged
 the winds
 With spiced May-sweets from bound to
 bound, and blew
 Fresh fire into the sun, and from within
 Burst thro' the heated buds, and sent his
 soul
 Into the songs of birds, and touch'd far-
 off
 His mountain-altars, his high hills, with
 flame
 Milder and purer.

Thro' the rocks we wound :
 The great pine shook with lonely sounds
 of joy
 That came on the sea-wind. As moun-
 tain streams
 Our bloods ran free : the sunshine seem'd
 to brood
 More warmly on the heart than on the
 brow.
 We often paused, and, looking back, we
 saw
 The clefts and openings in the mountains
 fill'd
 With the blue valley and the glistening
 brooks,
 And all the low dark groves, a land of
 love !
 A land of promise, a land of memory,
 A land of promise flowing with the milk
 And honey of delicious memories !

And down to sea, and far as eye could
 ken,
 Each way from verge to verge a Holy
 Land,
 Still growing holier as you near'd the
 bay,
 For there the Temple stood.

When we had reach'd
 The grassy platform on some hill, I
 stoop'd,
 I gather'd the wild herbs, and for her
 brows
 And mine made garlands of the selfsame
 flower,
 Which she took smiling, and with my
 work thus
 Crown'd her clear forehead. Once or
 twice she told me
 (For I remember all things) to let grow
 The flowers that run poison in their veins.
 She said, 'The evil flourish in the world.'
 Then playfully she gave herself the lie—
 'Nothing in nature is unbeautiful ;
 So, brother, pluck and spare not.' So
 I wove
 Ev'n the dull-blooded poppy-stem, 'whose
 flower,
 Hued with the scarlet of a fierce sunrise,
 Like to the wild youth of an evil prince,
 Is without sweetness, but who crowns
 himself
 Above the naked poisons of his heart
 In his old age.' A graceful thought of
 hers
 Grav'n on my fancy ! And oh, how like
 a nymph,
 A stately mountain nymph she look'd !
 how native
 Unto the hills she trod on ! While I
 gazed
 My coronal slowly disentwined itself
 And fell between us both ; tho' while I
 gazed
 My spirit leap'd as with those thrills of
 bliss
 That strike across the soul in prayer, and
 show us
 That we are surely heard. Methought a
 light

Burst from the garland I had wov'n, and
stood

A solid glory on her bright black hair ;
A light methought broke from her dark,
dark eyes,

And shot itself into the singing winds ;
A mystic light flash'd ev'n from her white
robe

As from a glass in the sun, and fell about
My footsteps on the mountains.

Last we came

To what our people call 'The Hill of
Woe.'

A bridge is there, that, look'd at from
beneath

Seems but a cobweb filament to link
The yawning of an earthquake-cloven
chasm.

And thence one night, when all the winds
were loud,

A woful man (for so the story went)
Had thrust his wife and child and dash'd
himself

Into the dizzy depth below. Below,
Fierce in the strength of far descent, a
stream

Flies with a shatter'd foam along the
chasm.

The path was perilous, loosely strown
with crags :

We mounted slowly ; yet to both there
came

The joy of life in steepness overcome,
And victories of ascent, and looking down
On all that had look'd down on us ; and
joy

In breathing nearer heaven ; and joy to
me,

High over all the azure-circled earth,
To breathe with her as if in heaven itself ;
And more than joy that I to her became
Her guardian and her angel, raising her
Still higher, past all peril, until she saw
Beneath her feet the region far away,
Beyond the nearest mountain's bosky
brows,

Arise in open prospect—heath and hill,
And hollow lined and wooded to the lips,
And steep-down walls of battlemented rock

Gilded with broom, or shatter'd into
spires,

And glory of broad waters interfused,
Whence rose as it were breath and steam
of gold,

And over all the great wood rioting
And climbing, streak'd or starr'd at
intervals

With falling brook or blossom'd bush—
and last,

Framing the mighty landscape to the west,
A purple range of mountain-cones, be-
tween

Whose interspaces gush'd in blinding
bursts

The incorporate blaze of sun and sea.

At length

Descending from the point and standing
both,

There on the tremulous bridge, that from
beneath

Had seem'd a gossamer filament up in air,
We paused amid the splendour. All the
west

And ev'n unto the middle south was
ribb'd

And barr'd with bloom on bloom. The
sun below,

Held for a space 'twixt cloud and wave,
shower'd down

Rays of a mighty circle, weaving over
That various wilderness a tissue of light
Unparallel'd. On the other side, the
moon,

Half-melted into thin blue air, stood still,
And pale and fibrous as a wither'd leaf,
Nor yet endured in presence of His eyes
To induce his lustre ; most unloverlike,
Since in his absence full of light and joy,
And giving light to others. But this
most,

Next to her presence whom I loved so
well,

Spoke loudly even into my inmost heart
As to my outward hearing : the loud
stream,

Forth issuing from his portals in the crag
(A visible link unto the home of my
heart),

Ran amber toward the west, and nigh
 the sea
 Parting my own loved mountains was
 received,
 Shorn of its strength, into the sympathy
 Of that small bay, which out to open
 main
 Glow'd intermingling close beneath the
 sun.
 Spirit of Love! that little hour was bound
 Shut in from Time, and dedicate to
 thee:
 Thy fires from heaven had touch'd it,
 and the earth
 They fell on became hallow'd evermore.

We turn'd: our eyes met: hers were
 bright, and mine
 Were dim with floating tears, that shot
 the sunset
 In lightnings round me; and my name
 was borne
 Upon her breath. Henceforth my name
 has been
 A hallow'd memory like the names of old,
 A center'd, glory-circled memory,
 And a peculiar treasure, brooking not
 Exchange or currency: and in that hour
 A hope flow'd round me, like a golden
 mist
 Charm'd amid eddies of melodious airs,
 A moment, ere the onward whirlwind
 shatter it,
 Waver'd and floated—which was less
 than Hope,
 Because it lack'd the power of perfect
 Hope;
 But which was more and higher than all
 Hope,
 Because all other Hope had lower aim;
 Even that this name to which her gracious
 lips
 Did lend such gentle utterance, this one
 name,
 In some obscure hereafter, might in-
 wreath
 (How lovelier, nobler then!) her life, her
 love,
 With my life, love, soul, spirit, and heart
 and strength.

'Brother,' she said, 'let this be call'd
 henceforth
 The Hill of Hope;' and I replied, 'O
 sister,
 My will is one with thine; the Hill of
 Hope.'
 Nevertheless, we did not change the name.

I did not speak: I could not speak my
 love.
 Love lieth deep: Love dwells not in lip-
 depths.
 Love wraps his wings on either side the
 heart,
 Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
 Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
 So that they pass not to the shrine of
 sound.
 Else had the life of that delighted hour
 Drunk in the largeness of the utterance
 Of Love; but how should Earthly mea-
 sure mete
 The Heavenly-unmeasured or unlimited
 Love,
 Who scarce can tune his high majestic
 sense
 Unto the thundersong that wheels the
 spheres,
 Scarce living in the Æolian harmony,
 And flowing odour of the spacious air,
 Scarce housed within the circle of this
 Earth,
 Be cabin'd up in words and syllables,
 Which pass with that which breathes
 them? Sooner Earth
 Might go round Heaven, and the strait
 girth of Time
 Inswathe the fulness of Eternity,
 Than language grasp the infinite of Love.

O day which did enwomb that happy
 hour,
 Thou art blessed in the years, divinest day!
 O Genius of that hour which dost uphold
 Thy coronal of glory like a God,
 Amid thy melancholy mates far-seen,
 Who walk before thee, ever turning round
 To gaze upon thee till their eyes are dim
 With dwelling on the light and depth of
 thine,

Thy name is ever worshipp'd among
hours !

Had I died then, I had not seem'd to die,
For bliss stood round me like the light of
Heaven,—

Had I died then, I had not known the
death ;

Yea had the Power from whose right
hand the light

Of Life issueth, and from whose left hand
floweth

The Shadow of Death, perennial efflu-
ences,

Whereof to all that draw the wholesome
air,

Somewhile the one must overflow the
other ;

Then had he stemm'd my day with night,
and driven

My current to the fountain whence it
sprang,—

Even his own abiding excellence—

On me, methinks, that shock of gloom
had fall'n

Unfelt, and in this glory I had merged
The other, like the sun I gazed upon,
Which seeming for the moment due to
death,

And dipping his head low beneath the
verge,

Yet bearing round about him his own day,
In confidence of unabated strength,

Steppeth from Heaven to Heaven, from
light to light,

And holdeth his undimmed forehead far
Into a clearer zenith, pure of cloud.

We trod the shadow of the downward
hill ;

We past from light to dark. On the
other side

Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,
Which none have fathom'd. If you go
far in

(The country people rumour) you may
hear

The moaning of the woman and the child,
Shut in the secret chambers of the rock.

I too have heard a sound—perchance of
streams

Running far on within its inmost halls,
The home of darkness ; but the cavern-
mouth,

Half overtrailed with a wanton weed,
Gives birth to a brawling brook, that
passing lightly

Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,
Is presently received in a sweet grave
Of eglantines, a place of burial

Far lovelier than its cradle ; for unseen,
But taken with the sweetness of the place,

It makes a constant bubbling melody
That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower
down

Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding,
leaves

Low banks of yellow sand ; and from the
woods

That belt it rise three dark, tall cy-
presses,—

Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,
That men plant over graves.

Hither we came,

And sitting down upon the golden moss,
Held converse sweet and low—low con-
verse sweet,

In which our voices bore least part. The
wind

Told a lovetale beside us, how he woo'd
The waters, and the waters answering
lisp'd

To kisses of the wind, that, sick with love,
Fainted at intervals, and grew again

To utterance of passion. Ye cannot
shape

Fancy so fair as is this memory.

Methought all excellence that ever was
Had drawn herself from many thousand
years,

And all the separate Edens of this earth,
To centre in this place and time. I
listen'd,

And her words stole with most prevailing
sweetness

Into my heart, as thronging fancies come
To boys and girls when summer days are
new,

And soul and heart and body are all at
ease :

What marvel my Camilla told me all?
It was so happy an hour, so sweet a place,
And I was as the brother of her blood,
And by that name I moved upon her
breath;

Dear name, which had too much of near-
ness in it

And heralded the distance of this time!
At first her voice was very sweet and low,
As if she were afraid of utterance;
But in the onward current of her speech,
(As echoes of the hollow-banked brooks
Are fashion'd by the channel which they
keep),

Her words did of their meaning borrow
sound,

Her cheek did catch the colour of her
words.

I heard and trembled, yet I could but
hear;

My heart paused—my raised eyelids
would not fall,

But still I kept my eyes upon the sky.
I seem'd the only part of Time stood still,
And saw the motion of all other things;
While her words, syllable by syllable,
Like water, drop by drop, upon my ear
Fell; and I wish'd, yet wish'd her not
to speak;

But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
What marvel my Camilla told me all
Her maiden dignities of Hope and Love—
'Perchance,' she said, 'return'd.' Even
then the stars

Did tremble in their stations as I gazed;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
No wish—no hope. Hope was not wholly
dead,

But breathing hard at the approach of
Death,—

Camilla, my Camilla, who was mine
No longer in the dearest sense of mine—
For all the secret of her inmost heart,
And all the maiden empire of her mind,
Lay like a map before me, and I saw
There, where I hoped myself to reign as
king,

There, where that day I crown'd myself
as king,

There in my realm and even on my throne,

Another! then it seem'd as tho' a link
Of some tight chain within my inmost
frame

Was riven in twain: that life I heeded not
Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the
grave,

The darkness of the grave and utter night,
Did swallow up my vision; at her feet,
Even the feet of her I loved, I fell,
Smit with exceeding sorrow unto Death.

Then had the earth beneath me yawn-
ing cloven

With such a sound as when an iceberg
splits

From cope to base—had Heaven from
all her doors,

With all her golden thresholds clashing,
roll'd

Her heaviest thunder—I had lain as
dead,

Mute, blind and motionless as then I lay;
Dead, for henceforth there was no life
for me!

Mute, for henceforth what use were
words to me!

Blind, for the day was as the night to
me!

The night to me was kinder than the
day;

The night in pity took away my day,
Because my grief as yet was newly born
Of eyes too weak to look upon the light;
And thro' the hasty notice of the ear
Frail Life was startled from the tender
love

Of him she brooded over. Would I had
lain

Until the plaited ivy-tress had wound
Round my worn limbs, and the wild brier
had driven

Its knotted thorns thro' my unpaining
brows,

Leaning its roses on my faded eyes.
The wind had blown above me, and the
rain

Had fall'n upon me, and the gilded snake
Had nestled in this bosom-throne of
Love,

But I had been at rest for evermore.

Long time entrancement held me. All too soon
 Life (like a wanton too-officious friend,
 Who will not *hear* denial, vain and rude
 With proffer of unwish'd-for services)
 Entering all the avenues of sense
 Past thro' into his citadel, the brain,
 With hated warmth of apprehensiveness.
 And first the chillness of the sprinkled
 brook
 Smote on my brows, and then I seem'd
 to hear
 Its murmur, as the drowning seaman
 hears,
 Who with his head below the surface
 dropt
 Listens the muffled booming indistinct
 Of the confused floods, and dimly knows
 His head shall rise no more: and then
 came in
 The white light of the weary moon
 above,
 Diffused and molten into flaky cloud.
 Was my sight drunk that it did shape to
 me
 Him who should own that name? Were
 it not well
 If so be that the echo of that name
 Ringing within the fancy had updrawn
 A fashion and a phantasm of the form
 It should attach to? Phantom!—had
 the ghastliest
 That ever lusted for a body, sucking
 The foul steam of the grave to thicken
 by it,
 There in the shuddering moonlight
 brought its face
 And what it has for eyes as close to
 mine
 As he did—better that than his, than he
 The friend, the neighbour, Lionel, the
 beloved,
 The loved, the lover, the happy Lionel,
 The low-voiced, tender-spirited Lionel,
 All joy, to whom my agony was a joy.
 O how her choice did leap forth from his
 eyes!
 O how her love did clothe itself in smiles
 About his lips! and—not one moment's
 grace—

Then when the effect weigh'd seas upon
 my head
 To come my way! to twit me with the
 cause!

Was not the land as free thro' all her
 ways
 To him as me? Was not his wont to
 walk
 Between the going light and growing
 night?
 Had I not learnt my loss before he came?
 Could that be more because he came my
 way?
 Why should he not come my way if he
 would?
 And yet to-night, to-night—when all my
 wealth
 Flash'd from me in a moment and I fell
 Beggar'd for ever—why *should* he come
 my way
 Robed in those robes of light I must not
 wear,
 With that great crown of beams about his
 brows—
 Come like an angel to a damned soul,
 To tell him of the bliss he had with
 God—
 Come like a careless and a greedy heir
 That scarce can wait the reading of the
 will
 Before he takes possession? Was mine
 a mood
 To be invaded rudely, and not rather
 A sacred, secret, unapproached woe,
 Unspeakable? I was shut up with
 Grief;
 She took the body of my past delight,
 Narded and swathed and balm'd it for
 herself,
 And laid it in a sepulchre of rock
 Never to rise again. I was led mute
 Into her temple like a sacrifice;
 I was the High Priest in her holiest
 place,
 Not to be loudly broken in upon.

Oh friend, thoughts deep and heavy as
 these well-nigh
 O'erbore the limits of my brain: but he

Bent o'er me, and my neck his arm up-
stay'd.

I thought it was an adder's fold, and once
I strove to disengage myself, but fail'd,
Being so feeble: she bent above me, too;
Wan was her cheek; for whatsoe'er of
blight

Lives in the dewy touch of pity had made
The red rose there a pale one—and her
eyes—

I saw the moonlight glitter on their
tears—

And some few drops of that distressful
rain

Fell on my face, and her long ringlets
moved,

Drooping and beaten by the breeze, and
brush'd

My fallen forehead in their to and fro,
For in the sudden anguish of her heart
Loosed from their simple thrall they had
flow'd abroad,

And floated on and parted round her neck,
Mantling her form halfway. She, when
I woke,

Something she ask'd, I know not what,
and ask'd,

Unanswer'd, since I spake not; for the
sound

Of that dear voice so musically low,
And now first heard with any sense of
pain,

As it had taken life away before,
Choked all the syllables, that strove to
rise

From my full heart.

The blissful lover, too,
From his great hoard of happiness dis-
till'd

Some drops of solace; like a vain rich
man,

That, having always prosper'd in the
world,

Folding his hands, deals comfortable
words

To hearts wounded for ever; yet, in
truth,

Fair speech was his and delicate of
phrase,

Falling in whispers on the sense, ad-
dress'd

More to the inward than the outward
ear,

As rain of the midsummer midnight soft,
Scarce-heard, recalling fragrance and the
green

Of the dead spring: but mine was wholly
dead,

No bud, no leaf, no flower, no fruit for
me.

Yet who had done, or who had suffer'd
wrong?

And why was I to darken their pure love,
If, as I found, they two did love each
other,

Because my own was darken'd? Why
was I

To cross between their happy star and
them?

To stand a shadow by their shining doors,
And vex them with my darkness? Did
I love her?

Ye know that I did love her; to this
present

My full-orb'd love has waned not. Did
I love her,

And could I look upon her tearful eyes?
What had *she* done to weep? Why
should *she* weep?

O innocent of spirit—let my heart
Break rather—whom the gentlest airs of
Heaven

Should kiss with an unwonted gentleness.
Her love did murder mine? What then?
She deem'd

I wore a brother's mind: she call'd me
brother:

She told me all her love: she shall not
weep.

The brightness of a burning thought,
awhile

In battle with the glooms of my dark will,
Moonlike emerged, and to itself lit up
There on the depth of an unfathom'd woe
Reflex of action. Starting up at once,
As from a dismal dream of my own death,
I, for I loved her, lost my love in Love;
I, for I loved her, graspt the hand she lov'd,

And laid it in her own, and sent my cry
Thro' the blank night to Him who loving
made

The happy and the unhappy love, that He
Would hold the hand of blessing over them,
Lionel, the happy, and her, and her, his
bride !

Let them so love that men and boys may
say,

'Lo ! how they love each other !' till
their love

Shall ripen to a proverb, unto all
Known, when their faces are forgot in
the land—

One golden dream of love, from which
may death

Awake them with heaven's music in a life
More living to some happier happiness,
Swallowing its precedent in victory.

And as for me, Camilla, as for me,—
The dew of tears is an unwholesome dew,
They will but sicken the sick plant the
more.

Deem that I love thee but as brothers do,
So shalt thou love me still as sisters do ;
Or if thou dream aught farther, dream
but how

I could have loved thee, had there been
none else

To love as lovers, loved again by thee.

Or this, or somewhat like to this, I
spake,

When I beheld her weep so ruefully ;
For sure my love should ne'er indue the
front

And mask of Hate, who lives on others'
moans.

Shall Love pledge Hatred in her bitter
draughts,

And batten on her poisons ? Love forbid !
Love passeth not the threshold of cold
Hate,

And Hate is strange beneath the roof of
Love.

O Love, if thou be'st Love, dry up these
tears

Shed for the love of Love ; for tho' mine
image,

The subject of thy power, be cold in her,

Yet, like cold snow, it melteth in the
source

Of these sad tears, and feeds their down-
ward flow.

So Love, arraign'd to judgment and to
death,

Received unto himself a part of blame,
Being guiltless, as an innocent prisoner,
Who, when the woful sentence hath been
past,

And all the clearness of his fame hath gone
Beneath the shadow of the curse of man,
First falls asleep in swoon, wherefrom
awaked,

And looking round upon his tearful friends,
Forthwith and in his agony conceives
A shameful sense as of a cleaving crime—
For whence without some guilt should
such grief be ?

So died that hour, and fell into the
abysm

Of forms outworn, but not to me outworn,
Who never hail'd another—was there
one ?

There might be one—one other, worth
the life

That made it sensible. So that hour died
Like odour rapt into the winged wind
Borne into alien lands and far away.

There be some hearts so airily built,
that they,

They—when their love is wreck'd—if
Love can wreck—

On that sharp ridge of utmost doom ride
highly

Above the perilous seas of Change and
Chance ;

Nay, more, hold out the lights of cheer-
fulness ;

As the tall ship, that many a dreary year
Knit to some dismal sandbank far at sea,
All thro' the livelong hours of utter dark,
Showers slanting light upon the dolorous
wave.

For me—what light, what gleam on those
black ways

Where Love could walk with banish'd
Hope no more ?

It was ill-done to part you, Sisters fair;
 Love's arms were wreath'd about the
 neck of Hope,
 And Hope kiss'd Love, and Love drew
 in her breath
 In that close kiss, and drank her
 whisper'd tales.
 They said that Love would die when
 Hope was gone,
 And Love mourn'd long, and sorrow'd
 after Hope;
 At last she sought out Memory, and they
 trod
 The same old paths where Love had
 walk'd with Hope,
 And Memory fed the soul of Love with
 tears.

II.

FROM that time forth I would not see
 her more;
 But many weary moons I lived alone—
 Alone, and in the heart of the great forest.
 Sometimes upon the hills beside the sea
 All day I watch'd the floating isles of shade,
 And sometimes on the shore, upon the
 sands
 Insensibly I drew her name, until
 The meaning of the letters shot into
 My brain; anon the wanton billow wash'd
 Them over, till they faded like my love.
 The hollow caverns heard me—the black
 brooks
 Of the midforest heard me—the soft
 winds,
 Laden with thistledown and seeds of
 flowers,
 Paused in their course to hear me, for my
 voice
 Was all of thee: the merry linnet knew
 me,
 The squirrel knew me, and the dragonfly
 Shot by me like a flash of purple fire.
 The rough brier tore my bleeding palms;
 the hemlock,
 Brow-high, did strike my forehead as I
 past;
 Yet trod I not the wildflower in my path,
 Nor bruised the wildbird's egg.

Was this the end?
 Why grew we then together in one plot?
 Why fed we from one fountain? drew
 one sun?
 Why were our mothers' branches of one
 stem?
 Why were we one in all things, save in
 that
 Where to have been one had been the
 cope and crown
 Of all I hoped and fear'd?—if that same
 nearness
 Were father to this distance, and that
 one
 Vauntcourier to this *double*? if Affection
 Living slew Love, and Sympathy hew'd
 out
 The bosom-sepulchre of Sympathy?

Chiefly I sought the cavern and the hill
 Where last we roam'd together, for the
 sound
 Of the loud stream was pleasant, and the
 wind
 Came wooingly with woodbine smells,
 Sometimes
 All day I sat within the cavern-mouth,
 Fixing my eyes on those three cypress-
 cones
 That spired above the wood; and with
 mad hand
 Tearing the bright leaves of the ivy-
 screen,
 I cast them in the noisy brook beneath,
 And watch'd them till they vanish'd from
 my sight
 Beneath the bower of wreathed eglan-
 tines:
 And all the fragments of the living rock
 (Huge blocks, which some old trembling
 of the world
 Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they
 fell
 Half-digging their own graves) these in
 my agony
 Did I make bare of all the golden moss,
 Wherewith the dashing runnel in the
 spring
 Had liveried them all over. In my
 brain

The spirit seem'd to flag from thought to thought,
 As moonlight wandering thro' a mist : my blood
 Crept like marsh drains thro' all my languid limbs ;
 The motions of my heart seem'd far within me,
 Unfrequent, low, as tho' it told its pulses ;
 And yet it shook me, that my frame would shudder,
 As if 'twere drawn asunder by the rack.
 But over the deep graves of Hope and Fear,
 And all the broken palaces of the Past,
 Brooded one master-passion evermore,
 Like to a low-hung and a fiery sky
 Above some fair metropolis, earth-shock'd,—
 Hung round with ragged rims and burning folds,—
 Embathing all with wild and woful hues,
 Great hills of ruins, and collapsed masses
 Of thundershaken columns indistinct,
 And fused together in the tyrannous light—
 Ruins, the ruin of all my life and me !

Sometimes I thought Camilla was no more,
 Some one had told me she was dead, and ask'd
 If I would see her burial : then I seem'd
 To rise, and through the forest-shadow borne
 With more than mortal swiftness, I ran down
 The steepy sea-bank, till I came upon
 The rear of a procession, curving round
 The silver-sheeted bay : in front of which
 Six stately virgins, all in white, upbare
 A broad earth-sweeping pall of whitest lawn,
 Wreathed round the bier with garlands :
 in the distance,
 From out the yellow woods upon the hill
 Look'd forth the summit and the pinnacles
 Of a gray steeple—thence at intervals

A low bell tolling. All the pageantry,
 Save those six virgins which upheld the bier,
 Were stoled from head to foot in flowing black ;
 One walk'd abreast with me, and veil'd his brow,
 And he was loud in weeping and in praise
 Of her, we follow'd : a strong sympathy
 Shook all my soul : I flung myself upon him
 In tears and cries : I told him all my love,
 How I had loved her from the first ; whereat
 He shrank and howl'd, and from his brow drew back
 His hand to push me from him ; and the face,
 The very face and form of Lionel
 Flash'd thro' my eyes into my innermost brain,
 And at his feet I seem'd to faint and fall,
 To fall and die away. I could not rise
 Albeit I strove to follow. They past on,
 The lordly Phantasms ! in their floating folds
 They past and were no more : but I had fallen
 Prone by the dashing runnel on the grass.

Alway the inaudible invisible thought,
 Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
 Shaped by the audible and visible,
 Moulded the audible and visible ;
 All crisped sounds of wave and leaf and wind,
 Flatter'd the fancy of my fading brain ;
 The cloud-pavilion'd element, the wood,
 The mountain, the three cypresses, the cave,
 Storm, sunset, glows and glories of the moon
 Below black firs, when silent-creeping winds
 Laid the long night in silver streaks and bars,
 Were wrought into the tissue of my dream :
 The moanings in the forest, the loud brook,

Cries of the partridge like a rusty key
 Turn'd in a lock, owl-whoop and dor-
 hawk-whirr
 Awoke me not, but were a part of sleep,
 And voices in the distance calling to me
 And in my vision bidding me dream on,
 Like sounds without the twilight realm
 of dreams,
 Which wander round the bases of the
 hills,
 And murmur at the low-dropt eaves of
 sleep,
 Half-entering the portals. Oftentimes
 The vision had fair prelude, in the end
 Opening on darkness, stately vestibules
 To caves and shows of Death : whether
 the mind,
 With some revenge—even to itself un-
 known,—
 Made strange division of its suffering
 With her, whom to have suffering view'd
 had been
 Extremest pain ; or that the clear-eyed
 Spirit,
 Being blunted in the Present, grew at
 length
 Prophetic and prescient of whate'er
 The Future had in store : or that which
 most
 Enchains belief, the sorrow of my spirit
 Was of so wide a compass it took in
 All I had loved, and my dull agony,
 Ideally to her transferr'd, became
 Anguish intolerable.

The day waned ;

Alone I sat with her : about my brow
 Her warm breath floated in the utterance
 Of silver-chorded tones : her lips were
 sunder'd
 With smiles of tranquil bliss, which broke
 in light
 Like morning from her eyes—her elo-
 quent eyes,
 (As I have seen them many a hundred
 times)
 Fill'd all with pure clear fire, thro' mine
 down rain'd
 Their spirit-searching splendours. As a
 vision

Unto a haggard prisoner, iron-stay'd
 In damp and dismal dungeons under-
 ground,
 Confined on points of faith, when strength
 is shock'd
 With torment, and expectancy of worse
 Upon the morrow, thro' the ragged walls,
 All unawares before his half-shut eyes,
 Comes in upon him in the dead of night,
 And with the excess of sweetness and of
 awe,
 Makes the heart tremble, and the sight
 run over
 Upon his steely gyves ; so those fair eyes
 Shone on my darkness, forms which ever
 stood
 Within the magic cirque of memory,
 Invisible but deathless, waiting still
 The edict of the will to reassume
 The semblance of those rare realities
 Of which they were the mirrors. Now
 the light
 Which was their life, burst through the
 cloud of thought
 Keen, irrepressible.

It was a room

Within the summer-house of which I spake,
 Hung round with paintings of the sea,
 and one
 A vessel in mid-ocean, her heaved prow
 Clambering, the mast bent and the ravin
 wind
 In her sail roaring. From the outer day,
 Betwixt the close-set ivies came a broad
 And solid beam of isolated light,
 Crowded with driving atomies, and fell
 Slanting upon that picture, from prime
 youth
 Well-known well-loved. She drew it
 long ago
 Forthgazing on the waste and open sea,
 One morning when the upblown billow
 ran
 Shoreward beneath red clouds, and I had
 pour'd
 Into the shadowing pencil's naked forms
 Colour and life : it was a bond and seal
 Of friendship, spoken of with tearful
 smiles ;

A monument of childhood and of love ;
 The poesy of childhood ; my lost love
 Symbol'd in storm. We gazed on it
 together
 In mute and glad remembrance, and
 each heart
 Grew closer to the other, and the eye
 Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing
 like
 The Indian on a still-eyed snake, low-
 couch'd—
 A beauty which is death ; when all at
 once
 That painted vessel, as with inner life,
 Began to heave upon that painted sea ;
 An earthquake, my loud heart-beats,
 made the ground
 Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life
 And breath and motion, past and flow'd
 away
 To those unreal billows : round and
 round
 A whirlwind caught and bore us ; mighty
 gyres
 Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-
 driven
 Far thro' the dizzy dark. Aloud she
 shriek'd ;
 My heart was cloven with pain ; I wound
 my arms
 About her : we whirl'd giddily ; the wind
 Sung ; but I clasp'd her without fear :
 her weight
 Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim
 eyes,
 And parted lips which drank her breath,
 down-hung
 The jaws of Death : I, groaning, from
 me flung
 Her empty phantom : all the sway and
 whirl
 Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
 Down welter'd thro' the dark ever and
 ever.

III.

I CAME one day and sat among the
 stones
 Strewn in the entry of the moaning
 cave ;

A morning air, sweet after rain, ran
 over
 The rippling levels of the lake, and
 blew
 Coolness and moisture and all smells of
 bud
 And foliage from the dark and dripping
 woods
 Upon my fever'd brows that shook and
 throb'd
 From temple unto temple. To what
 height
 The day had grown I know not. Then
 came on me
 The hollow tolling of the bell, and all
 The vision of the bier. As heretofore
 I walk'd behind with one who veil'd his
 brow.
 Methought by slow degrees the sullen
 bell
 Toll'd quicker, and the breakers on the
 shore
 Sloped into louder surf : those that went
 with me,
 And those that held the bier before my
 face,
 Moved with one spirit round about the
 bay,
 Trod swifter steps ; and while I walk'd
 with these
 In marvel at that gradual change, I
 thought
 Four bells instead of one began to ring,
 Four merry bells, four merry marriage-
 bells,
 In clanging cadence jangling peal on
 peal—
 A long loud clash of rapid marriage-
 bells.
 Then those who led the van, and those
 in rear,
 Rush'd into dance, and like wild Bac-
 chanals
 Fled onward to the steeple in the
 woods :
 I, too, was borne along and felt the
 blast
 Beat on my heated eyelids : all at once
 The front rank made a sudden halt ; the
 bells

Lapsed into frightful stillness ; the surge
 fell
 From thunder into whispers ; those six
 maids
 With shrieks and ringing laughter on the
 sand
 Threw down the bier ; the woods upon
 the hill
 Waved with a sudden gust that sweeping
 down
 Took the edges of the pall, and blew it
 far
 Until it hung, a little silver cloud
 Over the sounding seas : I turn'd : my
 heart
 Shrank in me, like a snowflake in the
 hand,
 Waiting to see the settled countenance
 Of her I loved, adorn'd with fading
 flowers.
 But she from out her death-like chrysalis,
 She from her bier, as into fresher life,
 My sister, and my cousin, and my
 love,
 Leapt lightly clad in bridal white—her
 hair
 Studded with one rich Provence rose—a
 light
 Of smiling welcome round her lips—her
 eyes
 And cheeks as bright as when she climb'd
 the hill.
 One hand she reach'd to those that came
 behind,
 And while I mused nor yet endured to
 take
 So rich a prize, the man who stood with
 me
 Stept gaily forward, throwing down his
 robes,
 And claspt her hand in his : again the
 bells
 Jangled and clang'd : again the stormy
 surf
 Crash'd in the shingle : and the whirling
 rout
 Led by those two rush'd into dance, and
 fled
 Wind-footed to the steeple in the
 woods,

Till they were swallow'd in the leafy
 bowers,
 And I stood solè beside the vacant bier.

There, there, my latest vision—then the
 event !

IV.

THE GOLDEN SUPPER.¹

(*Another speaks.*)

HE flies the event : he leaves the event
 to me :

Poor Julian—how he rush'd away ; the
 bells,

Those marriage-bells, echoing in ear and
 heart—

But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,
 As who should say 'Continue.' Well
 he had

One golden hour—of triumph shall I say?
 Solace at least—before he left his home.

Would you had seen him in that hour
 of his !

He moved thro' all of it majestically—
 Restrain'd himself quite to the close—
 but now—

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-
 bells,

Or prophets of them in his fantasy,
 I never ask'd : but Lionel and the girl
 Were wedded, and our Julian came
 again

Back to his mother's house among the
 pines.

But these, their gloom, the mountains and
 the Bay,

The whole land weigh'd him down as
 Ætna does

The Giant of Mythology : he would go,
 Would leave the land for ever, and had
 gone

Surely, but for a whisper, 'Go not yet,'
 Some warning—sent divinely—*as it*
 seem'd

¹ This poem is founded upon a story in Boccaccio. See Introduction, p. 476.

By that which follow'd — but of this I
 deem
 As of the visions that he told—the event
 Glanced back upon them in his after
 life,
 And partly made them—tho' he knew it
 not.

And thus he stay'd and would not look
 at her—
 No not for months : but, when the
 eleventh moon
 After their marriage lit the lover's Bay,
 Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and
 said,
 Would you could toll me out of life, but
 found—
 All softly as his mother broke it to him—
 A crueller reason than a crazy ear,
 For that low knell tolling his lady dead—
 Dead—and had lain three days without
 a pulse :
 All that look'd on her had pronounced
 her dead.
 And so they bore her (for in Julian's land
 They never nail a dumb head up in
 elm),
 Bore her free-faced to the free airs of
 heaven,
 And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then ? not die : he is here
 and hale—
 Not plunge headforemost from the moun-
 tain there,
 And leave the name of Lover's Leap :
 not he :
 He knew the meaning of the whisper now,
 Thought that he knew it. 'This, I stay'd
 for this ;
 O love, I have not seen you for so long.
 Now, now, will I go down into the grave,
 I will be all alone with all I love,
 And kiss her on the lips. She is his no
 more :
 The dead returns to me, and I go down
 To kiss the dead.'

The fancy stirr'd him so
 He rose and went, and entering the dim
 vault,

And, making there a sudden light, beheld
 All round about him that which all will
 be.

The light was but a flash, and went again.
 Then at the far end of the vault he saw
 His lady with the moonlight on her face ;
 Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars
 Of black and bands of silver, which the
 moon
 Struck from an open grating overhead
 High in the wall, and all the rest of her
 Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the
 vault.

'It was my wish,' he said, 'to pass, to
 sleep,
 To rest, to be with her—till the great
 day
 Peal'd on us with that music which rights
 all,
 And raised us hand in hand.' And
 kneeling there
 Down in the dreadful dust that once was
 man,
 Dust, as he said, that once was loving
 hearts,
 Hearts that had beat with such a love as
 mine—
 Not such as mine, no, nor for such as
 her—
 He softly put his arm about her neck
 And kiss'd her more than once, till help-
 less death
 And silence made him bold—nay, but I
 wrong him,
 He revered his dear lady even in
 death ;
 But, placing his true hand upon her
 heart,
 'O, you warm heart,' he moan'd, 'not
 even death
 Can chill you all at once : ' then starting,
 thought
 His dreams had come again. 'Do I
 wake or sleep ?
 Or am I made immortal, or my love
 Mortal once more ? ' It beat—the heart
 —it beat :
 Faint—but it beat : at which his own
 began

To pulse with such a vehemence that it
drown'd

The feebler motion underneath his hand.
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,
He raised her softly from the sepulchre,
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak
He came in, and now striding fast, and
now

Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore
Holding his golden burthen in his arms,
So bore her thro' the solitary land
Back to the mother's house where she
was born.

There the good mother's kindly minis-
tering,

With half a night's appliances, recall'd
Her fluttering life : she rais'd an eye that
ask'd

'Where?' till the things familiar to her
youth

Had made a silent answer : then she spoke
'Here ! and how came I here?' and
learning it

(They told her somewhat rashly as I
think)

At once began to wander and to wail,
'Ay, but you know that you must give
me back :

Send ! bid him come ;' but Lionel was
away—

Stung by his loss had vanish'd, none
knew where.

'He casts me out,' she wept, 'and goes'
—a wail

That seeming something, yet was nothing,
born

Not from believing mind, but shatter'd
nerve,

Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof
At some precipitance in her burial.

Then, when her own true spirit had
return'd,

'Oh yes, and you,' she said, 'and none
but you ?

For you have given me life and love again,
And none but you yourself shall tell him
of it,

And you shall give me back when he
returns.'

'Stay then a little,' answer'd Julian,
'here,

And keep yourself, none knowing, to
yourself ;

And I will do your will. I may not stay,
No, not an hour ; but send me notice of
him

When he returns, and then will I return,
And I will make a solemn offering of you
To him you love.' And faintly she
replied,

'And I will do *your* will, and none shall
know.'

Not know ? with such a secret to be
known.

But all their house was old and loved
them both,

And all the house had known the loves
of both ;

Had died almost to serve them any way,
And all the land was waste and solitary :

And then he rode away ; but after this,
An hour or two, Camilla's travail came

Upon her, and that day a boy was born,
Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,
And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,

There fever seized upon him : myself was
then

Travelling that land, and meant to rest
an hour ;

And sitting down to such a base repast,
It makes me angry yet to speak of it—

I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was

vile)
And in a loft, with none to wait on him,

Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,
Raving of dead men's dust and beating

hearts.

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,
A flat malarian world of reed and rush !

But there from fever and my care of him
Sprang up a friendship that may help us
yet.

For while we roam'd along the dreary
coast,

And waited for her message, piece by piece
 I learnt the drearier story of his life ;
 And, tho' he loved and honour'd Lionel,
 Found that the sudden wail his lady
 made
 Dwelt in his fancy : did he know her
 worth,
 Her beauty even? should he not be taught,
 Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,
 The value of that jewel he had to guard?

Suddenly came her notice and we past,
 I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the
 soul :
That makes the sequel pure ; tho' some
 of us
 Beginning at the sequel know no more.
 Not such am I : and yet I say the bird
 That will not hear my call, however
 sweet,
 But if my neighbour whistle answers
 him—
 What matter? there are others in the
 wood.
 Yet when I saw her (and I thought him
 crazed,
 Tho' not with such a craziness as needs
 A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of
 hers—
 Oh ! such dark eyes ! and not her eyes
 alone,
 But all from these to where she touch'd
 on earth,
 For such a craziness as Julian's look'd
 No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came
 To greet us, her young hero in her arms !
 'Kiss him,' she said. 'You gave me
 life again.
 He, but for you, had never seen it once.
 His other father you ! Kiss him, and then
 Forgive him, if his name be Julian too.'

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart !
 his own
 Sent such a flame into his face, I knew
 Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him
 there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,
 And sent at once to Lionel, praying him
 By that great love they both had borne
 the dead,
 To come and revel for one hour with him
 Before he left the land for evermore ;
 And then to friends—they were not many
 —who lived
 Scatteringly about that lonely land of
 his,
 And bad them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast : I
 never
 Sat at a costlier ; for all round his hall
 From column on to column, as in a
 wood,
 Not such as here—an equatorial one,
 Great garlands swung and blossom'd ;
 and beneath,
 Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,
 Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven
 knows when,
 Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten
 sun,
 And kept it thro' a hundred years of
 gloom,
 Yet glowing in a heart of ruby—cups
 Where nymph and god ran ever round in
 gold—
 Others of glass as costly—some with
 gems
 Moveable and resettleable at will,
 And trebling all the rest in value—Ah
 heavens !
 Why need I tell you all?—suffice to say
 That whatsoever such a house as his,
 And his was old, has in it rare or fair
 Was brought before the guest : and they,
 the guests,
 Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's
 eyes
 (I told you that he had his golden hour),
 And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd
 To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his
 And that resolved self-exile from a land
 He never would revisit, such a feast
 So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n
 than rich,
 But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall
 Two great funereal curtains, looping down,
 Parted a little ere they met the floor,
 About a picture of his lady, taken
 Some years before, and falling hid the frame.
 And just above the parting was a lamp :
 So the sweet figure folded round with night
 Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then—our solemn feast—we ate
 and drank,
 And might—the wines being of such nobleness—
 Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,
 And something weird and wild about it all :
 What was it ? for our lover seldom spoke,
 Scarce touch'd the meats ; but ever and anon
 A priceless goblet with a priceless wine
 Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use ;
 And when the feast was near an end, he said :

'There is a custom in the Orient,
 friends—
 I read of it in Persia—when a man
 Will honour those who feast with him,
 he brings
 And shows them whatsoever he accounts
 Of all his treasures the most beautiful,
 Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.
 This custom——'

Pausing here a moment, all
 The guests broke in upon him with meeting hands
 And cries about the banquet—'Beautiful !
 Who could desire more beauty at a feast ?'

The lover answer'd, 'There is more
 than one
 Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not
 Before my time, but hear me to the close.
 This custom steps yet further when the guest
 Is loved and honour'd to the uttermost.

For after he hath shown him gems or gold,
 He brings and sets before him in rich
 guise
 That which is thrice as beautiful as these,
 The beauty that is dearest to his heart—
 "O my heart's lord, would I could show
 you," he says,
 "Ev'n my heart too." And I propose
 to-night
 To show you what is dearest to my heart,
 And my heart too.

'But solve me first a doubt.
 I knew a man, nor many years ago ;
 He had a faithful servant, one who loved
 His master more than all on earth beside.
 He falling sick, and seeming close on
 death,
 His master would not wait until he died,
 But bad his menials bear him from the
 door,
 And leave him in the public way to die.
 I knew another, not so long ago,
 Who found the dying servant, took him
 home,
 And fed, and cherish'd him, and saved
 his life.
 I ask you now, should this first master
 claim
 His service, whom does it belong to ?
 him
 Who thrust him out, or him who saved
 his life ?'

This question, so flung down before
 the guests,
 And balanced either way by each, at
 length
 When some were doubtful how the law
 would hold,
 Was handed over by consent of all
 To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of
 phrase.
 And he beginning languidly—his loss
 Weigh'd on him yet—but warming as he
 went,
 Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,
 Affirming that as long as either lived,

By all the laws of love and gratefulness,
The service of the one so saved was due
All to the saver—adding, with a smile,
The first for many weeks—a semi-smile
As at a strong conclusion—‘body and
soul

And life and limbs, all his to work his will.’

Then Julian made a secret sign to me
To bring Camilla down before them all.
And crossing her own picture as she came,
And looking as much lovelier as herself
Is lovelier than all others—on her head
A diamond circlet, and from under this
A veil, that seemed no more than gilded
air,

Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze
With seeds of gold—so, with that grace
of hers,

Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,
That flings a mist behind it in the sun—
And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,
The younger Julian, who himself was
crown’d

With roses, none so rosy as himself—
And over all her babe and her the jewels
Of many generations of his house
Sparkled and flash’d, for he had decked
them out

As for a solemn sacrifice of love—
So she came in :—I am long in telling it,
I never yet beheld a thing so strange,
Sad, sweet, and strange together—floated
in—

While all the guests in mute amazement
rose—

And slowly pacing to the middle hall,
Before the board, there paused and stood,
her breast

Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,
Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.
But him she carried, him nor lights nor
feast

Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men ; who
cared

Only to use his own, and staring wide
And hungering for the gilt and jewell’d
world

About him, look’d, as he is like to prove,
When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

‘My guests,’ said Julian : ‘you are
honour’d now

Ev’n to the uttermost : in her behold
Of all my treasures the most beautiful,
Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.’
Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves
Led his dear lady to a chair of state.

And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face
Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again
Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,
And heard him muttering, ‘So like, so
like ;

She never had a sister. I knew none
Some cousin of his and hers—O God, so
like !’

And then he suddenly ask’d her if she
were.

She shook, and cast her eyes down, and
was dumb.

And then some other question’d if she
came

From foreign lands, and still she did not
speak.

Another, if the boy were hers : but she
To all their queries answer’d not a word,
Which made the amazement more, till
one of them

Said, shuddering, ‘Her spectre !’ But
his friend

Replied, in half a whisper, ‘Not at least
The spectre that will speak if spoken to.
Terrible pity, if one so beautiful
Prove, as I almost dread to find her,
dumb !’

But Julian, sitting by her, answer’d all
‘She is but dumb, because in her you
see

That faithful servant whom we spoke
about,

Obedient to her second master now ;
Which will not last. I have here to-night
a guest

So bound to me by common love and
loss—

What ! shall I bind him more ? in his
behalf,

Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him
That which of all things is the dearest to
me,

Not only showing? and he himself pronounced
 That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.
 'Now all be dumb, and promise all of you
 Not to break in on what I say by word
 Or whisper, while I show you all my heart.'
 And then began the story of his love
 As here to-day, but not so wordily—
 The passionate moment would not suffer that—
 Past thro' his visions to the burial; thence
 Down to this last strange hour in his own hall;
 And then rose up, and with him all his guests
 Once more as by enchantment; all but he,
 Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,
 And sat as if in chains—to whom he said:
 'Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife;
 And were it only for the giver's sake,
 And tho' she seem so like the one you lost,
 Yet cast her not away so suddenly,
 Lest there be none left here to bring her back:
 I leave this land for ever.' Here he ceased.
 Then taking his dear lady by one hand,
 And bearing on one arm the noble babe,
 He slowly brought them both to Lionel.
 And there the widower husband and dead wife
 Rush'd each at each with a cry, that rather seem'd
 For some new death than for a lifer renew'd;
 Whereat the very babe began to wail;
 At once they turn'd, and caught and brought him in
 To their charm'd circle, and, half killing him
 With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.
 But Lionel, when at last he freed himself
 From wife and child, and lifted up a face
 All over glowing with the sun of life,
 And love, and boundless thanks—the sight of this

So frighted our good friend, that turning to me
 And saying, 'It is over: let us go'—
 There were our horses ready at the doors—
 We bad them no farewell, but mounting these
 He past for ever from his native land;
 And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.

TO ALFRED TENNYSON
 MY GRANDSON.

GOLDEN-HAIR'D Ally whose name is one with mine,
 Crazy with laughter and babble and earth's new wine,
 Now that the flower of a year and a half is thine,
 O little blossom, O mine, and mine of mine,
 Glorious poet who never hast written a line,
 Laugh, for the name at the head of my verse is thine.
 May'st thou never be wrong'd by the name that is mine!

THE FIRST QUARREL.
 (IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT.)

I.
 'WAIT a little,' you say, 'you are sure it 'll all come right,'
 But the boy was born i' trouble, an' looks so wan an' so white:
 Wait! an' once I ha' waited—I hadn't to wait for long.
 Now I wait, wait, wait for Harry.—No, no, you are doing me wrong!
 Harry and I were married: the boy can hold up his head,
 The boy was born in wedlock, but after my man was dead;
 I ha' work'd for him fifteen years, an' I work an' I wait to the end.
 I am all alone in the world, an' you are my only friend.

II.
 Doctor, if *you* can wait, I'll tell you the tale o' my life.
 When Harry an' I were children, he call'd me his own little wife;

I was happy when I was with him, an'
 sorry when he was away,
 An' when we play'd together, I loved him
 better than play ;
 He workt me the daisy chain—he made
 me the cowslip ball,
 He fought the boys that were rude, an' I
 loved him better than all.
 Passionate girl tho' I was, an' often at
 home in disgrace,
 I never could quarrel with Harry—I had
 but to look in his face.

III.

There was a farmer in Dorset of Harry's
 kin, that had need
 Of a good stout lad at his farm ; he sent,
 an' the father agreed ;
 So Harry was bound to the Dorsetshire
 farm for years an' for years ;
 I walked with him down to the quay,
 poor lad, an' we parted in tears.
 The boat was beginning to move, we
 heard them a-ringing the bell,
 'I'll never love any but you, God bless
 you, my own little Nell.'

IV.

I was a child, an' he was a child, an' he
 came to harm ;
 There was a girl, a hussy, that workt with
 him up at the farm,
 One had deceived her an' left her alone
 with her sin an' her shame,
 And so she was wicked with Harry ; the
 girl was the most to blame.

V.

And years went over till I that was little
 had grown so tall,
 The men would say of the maids, 'Our
 Nelly's the flower of 'em all.'
 I didn't take heed o' *them*, but I taught
 myself all I could
 To make a good wife for Harry, when
 Harry came home for good.

VI.

Often I seem'd unhappy, and often as
 happy too,
 For I heard it abroad in the fields 'I'll
 never love any but you ;'

'I'll never love any but you' the morning
 song of the lark,
 'I'll never love any but you' the nightin-
 gale's hymn in the dark.

VII.

And Harry came home at last, but he
 look'd at me sidelong and shy,
 Vext me a bit, till he told me that so
 many years had gone by,
 I had grown so handsome and tall—that
 I might ha' forgot him somehow—
 For he thought—there were other lads—
 he was fear'd to look at me now.

VIII.

Hard was the frost in the field, we were
 married o' Christmas day,
 Married among the red berries, an' all as
 merry as May—
 Those were the pleasant times, my house
 an' my man were my pride,
 We seem'd like ships i' the Channel a-
 sailing with wind an' tide.

IX.

But work was scant in the Isle, tho' he
 tried the villages round,
 So Harry went over the Solent to see if
 work could be found ;
 An' he wrote 'I ha' six weeks' work,
 little wife, so far as I know ;
 I'll come for an hour to-morrow, an' kiss
 you before I go.'

X.

So I set to righting the house, for wasn't
 he coming that day ?
 An' I hit on an old deal-box that was
 push'd in a corner away,
 It was full of old odds an' ends, an' a
 letter along wi' the rest,
 I had better ha' put my naked hand in a
 hornets' nest.

XI.

'Sweetheart'—this was the letter—this
 was the letter I read—
 'You promised to find me work near you,
 an' I wish I was dead—'

Didn't you kiss me an' promise? you
haven't done it, my lad,
An' I almost died o' your going away,
an' I wish that I had.'

XII.

I too wish that I had—in the pleasant
times that had past,
Before I quarrell'd with Harry—*my*
quarrel—the first an' the last.

XIII.

For Harry came in, an' I flung him the
letter that drove me wild,
An' he told it me all at once, as simple as
any child,

'What can it matter, my lass, what I did
wi' my single life?

I ha' been as true to you as ever a man to
his wife;

An' *she* wasn't one o' the worst.' 'Then,'
I said, 'I'm none o' the best.'

An' he smiled at me, 'Ain't you, my love?
Come, come, little wife, let it rest!

The man isn't like the woman, no need
to make such a stir.'

But he anger'd me all the more, an' I said
'You were keeping with her,

When I was a-loving you all along an' the
same as before.'

An' he didn't speak for a while, an' he
anger'd me more and more.

Then he patted my hand in his gentle
way, 'Let bygones be!'

Bygones! you kept yours hush'd,' I said,
'when you married me!

By-gones ma' be come-agains; an' *she*—
in her shame an' her sin—

You'll have her to nurse my child, if I
die o' my lying in!

You'll make her its second mother! I
hate her—an' I hate you!

Ah, Harry, my man, you had better ha'
beaten me black an' blue

Than ha' spoken as kind as you did,
when I were so crazy wi' spite,

Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill
all come right.'

XIV.

An' he took three turns in the rain, an' I
watch'd him, an' when he came in

I felt that my heart was hard, he was all
wet thro' to the skin,

An' I never said 'off wi' the wet,' I never
said 'on wi' the dry,'

So I knew my heart was hard, when he
came to bid me goodbye.

'You said that you hated me, Ellen, but
that isn't true, you know;

I am going to leave you a bit—you'll kiss
me before I go.'

XV.

'Going! you're going to her—kiss her—
if you will,' I said—

I was near my time wi' the boy, I must
ha' been light i' my head—

'I had sooner be cursed than kiss'd!—I
didn't know well what I meant,

But I turn'd my face from *him*, an' he
turn'd *his* face an' he went.

XVI.

And then he sent me a letter, 'I've gotten
my work to do;

You wouldn't kiss me, my lass, an' I
never loved any but you;

I am sorry for all the quarrel an' sorry for
what she wrote,

I ha' six weeks' work in Jersey an' go to-
night by the boat.'

XVII.

An' the wind began to rise, an' I thought
of him out at sea,

An' I felt I had been to blame; he was
always kind to me.

'Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill
all come right'

An' the boat went down that night—the
boat went down that night.

RIZPAH.

17—.

I.

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind
over land and sea—

And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother,
come out to me.'

Why should he call me to-night, when he
knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and
the full moon stares at the snow.

II.

We should be seen, my dear ; they would
spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the
storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am
led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I
find myself drenched with the rain.

III.

Anything fallen again? nay—what was
there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd
the bones, I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*?
do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the
tree falls so must it lie.

IV.

Who let her in? how long has she been?
you—what have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have
spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none
of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart,
and begun to darken my eyes.

V.

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what
should *you* know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the
bitter frost and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—
you were only made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and
now you may go your way.

VI.

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit
by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have
only an hour of life.

I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he
went out to die.

'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he
never has told me a lie.

I whipt him for robbing an orchard once
when he was but a child—

'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said;
he was always so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my
Willy—he never could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier;
he would have been one of his best.

VII.

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and
they never would let him be good;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail,
and he swore that he would;

And he took no life, but he took one
purse, and when all was done

He flung it among his fellows—I'll none
of it, said my son.

VIII.

I came into court to the Judge and the
lawyers. I told them my tale,

God's own truth—but they kill'd him;
they kill'd him for robbing the mail.

They hang'd him in chains for a show—
we had always borne a good name—

To be hang'd for a thief—and then put
away—isn't that enough shame?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide
but they set him so high

That all the ships of the world could
stare at him, passing by.

God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and
horrible fowls of the air,

But not the black heart of the lawyer who
kill'd him and hang'd him there.

IX.

And the jailer forced me away. I had
bid him my last goodbye;

They had fasten'd the door of his cell
'O mother!' I heard him cry.

I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had
something further to say,

And now I never shall know it. The
jailer forced me away.

X.

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry
 of my boy that was dead,
 They seized me and shut me up : they
 fasten'd me down on my bed.
 'Mother, O mother !'—he call'd in the
 dark to me year after year—
 They beat me for that, they beat me—
 you know that I couldn't but hear ;
 And then at the last they found I had
 grown so stupid and still
 They let me abroad again—but the
 creatures had worked their will.

XI.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of
 my bone was left—
 I stole them all from the lawyers—and
 you, will you call it a theft ?—
 My baby, the bones that had suck'd me,
 the bones that had laughed and
 had cried—
 Theirs ? O no ! they are mine—not
 theirs—they had moved in my side.

XII.

Do you think I was scared by the bones ?
 I kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—
 I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night
 by the churchyard wall.
 My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the
 trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
 But I charge you never to say that I laid
 him in holy ground.

XIII.

They would scratch him up—they would
 hang him again on the cursed tree.
 Sin ? O yes—we are sinners, I know—
 let all that be,
 And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's
 good will toward men—
 'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'
 —let me hear it again ;
 'Full of compassion and mercy—long-
 suffering.' Yes, O yes !
 For the lawyer is born but to murder—
 the Saviour lives but to bless,

He'll never put on the black cap except
 for the worst of the worst,
 And the first may be last—I have heard it
 in church—and the last may be
 first.
 Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the
 Lord must know,
 Year after year in the mist and the wind
 and the shower and the snow.

XIV.

Heard, have you ? what ? they have told
 you he never repented his sin.
 How do they know it ? are *they* his
 mother ? are *you* of his kin ?
 Heard ! have you ever heard, when the
 storm on the downs began,
 The wind that 'ill wail like a child and
 the sea that 'ill moan like a man ?

XV.

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's
 all very well.
 But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall
 not find him in Hell.
 For I cared so much for my boy that the
 Lord has look'd into my care,
 And He means me I'm sure to be happy
 with Willy, I know not where.

XVI.

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul,
 that is all your desire :
 Do you think that I care for *my* soul if
 my boy be gone to the fire ?
 I have been with God in the dark—go,
 go, you may leave me alone—
 You never have borne a child—you are
 just as hard as a stone.

XVII.

Madam, I beg your pardon ! I think
 that you mean to be kind,
 But I cannot hear what you say for my
 Willy's voice in the wind—
 The snow and the sky so bright—he used
 but to call in the dark,
 And he calls to me now from the church
 and not from the gibbet—for *hark !*

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
 Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER.

I.

WAÄIT till our Sally cooms in, fur thou mun a' sights¹ to tell.
 Eh, but I be maäin glad to seeä tha sa 'arty an' well.
 'Cast awaäy on a disolut land wi' a vartical soon² !'
 Strange fur to goä fur to think what saäilors a' seëan an' a' doon ;
 'Summat to drink—sa' 'ot?' I 'a nowt but Adam's wine :
 What's the 'eät o' this little 'ill-side to the 'eät o' the line ?

II.

'What's i' tha bottle a-stanning theer?' I'll tell tha. Gin.
 But if thou wants thy grog, tha mun goä fur it down to the inn.
 Naay—fur I be maäin-glad, but thaw tha was iver sa dry,
 Thou gits naw gin fro' the bottle theer, an' I'll tell tha why.

III.

Meä an' thy sister was married, when wur it? back-end o' June,
 Ten year sin', and wa 'greed as well as a fiddle i' tune :
 I could fettle and clump owd booöts and shoes wi' the best on 'em all,
 As fer as fro' Thursby thurn hup to Harmsby and Hutterby Hall.

¹ The vowels *az*, pronounced separately though in the closest conjunction, best render the sound of the long *i* and *y* in this dialect. But since such words as *cräin'*, *daäin'*, *whaä*, *az* (I), etc., look awkward except in a page of express phonetics, I have thought it better to leave the simple *i* and *y*, and to trust that my readers will give them the broader pronunciation.

² The *oo* short, as in 'wood.'

We was busy as beeäs i' the bloom an' as 'appy as 'art could think,
 An' then the babby wur burn, and then I taäkes to the drink.

IV.

An' I weänt gaäinsaäy it, my lad, thaw I be hafe shaämed on it now,
 We could sing a good song at the Plow, we could sing a good song at the Plow ;
 Thaw once of a frosty night I slither'd an' hurted my huck,¹
 An' I coom'd neck-an-crop soomtimes slaäpe down i' the squad an' the muck :
 An' once I fowt wi' the Taäiloor—not hafe ov a man, my lad—
 Fur he scrawm'd an' scratted my faäce like a cat, an' it maäde 'er sa mad
 That Sally she turn'd a tongue-banger,² an' raäted ma, 'Sottin' thy braäins
 Guzzlin' an' soäkin' an' smoäkin' an' hawmin'³ about i' the laänes,
 Soä sow-droonk that tha doesn not touch thy 'at to the Squire ;'
 An' I looök'd cock-eyed at my noäse an' I seeäd 'im a-gittin' o' fire ;
 But sin' I wur hallus i' liquor an' hallus as droonk as a king,
 Foälsk' coostom flitted awaäy like a kite wi' a brokken string.

V.

An' Sally she wesh'd foälsk' cloäths to keep the wolf fro' the door,
 Eh but the moor she riled me, she druv me to drink the moor,
 Fur I fun', when 'er back wur turn'd, wheer Sally's owd stockin' wur 'id,
 An' I grabb'd the munny she maäde, and I weär'd it o' liquor, I did.

VI.

An' one night I cooms 'oäm like a bull gotten loose at a faäir,
 An' she wur a-waäitin' fo'mma, an' cryin' and teärin' 'er 'aäir,

¹ Hip.

² Scold.

³ Lounging.

An' I tummled athurt the craädle an'
 sweär'd as I'd breäk ivry stick
 O' furnitur 'ere i' the 'ouse, an' I gied
 our Sally a kick,
 An' I mash'd the taäbles an' chairs, an'
 she an' the babby beäl'd,¹
 Fur I knaw'd naw moor what I did nor
 a mortal beäst o' the feäld.

VII.

An' when I waäked i' the murnin' I seeäd
 that our Sally went laämed
 Cos' o' the kick as I gied 'er, an' I wur
 dreädfül ashaämed ;
 An' Sally wur sloomy² an' draggle taäil'd
 in an owd turn gown,
 An' the babby's faäce wurn't wesh'd an'
 the 'ole 'ouse hupside down.

VIII.

An' then I minded our Sally sa pratty
 an' neät an' sweät,
 Straät as a pole an' cleän as a flower fro'
 'eäd to feeät :
 An' then I minded the fust kiss I gied
 'er by Thursby thurn ;
 Theer wur a lark a-singin' 'is best of a
 Sunday at murn,
 Couldn't see 'im, we 'eärd 'im a-mountin'
 oop 'igher an' 'igher,
 An' then 'e turn'd to the sun, an' 'e
 shined like a sparkle o' fire.
 'Doesn't tha see 'im,' she axes, 'fur I
 can see 'im?' an' I
 Seeäd nobbut the smile o' the sun as
 danced in 'er pratty blue eye ;
 An' I says 'I mun gie tha a kiss,' an'
 Sally says 'Noä, thou moänt,'
 But I gied 'er a kiss, an' then anoother,
 an' Sally says 'doänt !'

IX.

An' when we coom'd into Meeätin', at
 fust she wur all in a tew,
 But, arter, we sing'd the 'ymn together
 like birds on a beugh ;

¹ Bellowed, cried out.² Sluggish, out of spirits.

An' Muggins 'e preäch'd o' Hell-fire an'
 the loov o' God fur men,
 An' then upo' coomin' awaäy Sally gied
 me a kiss ov 'ersen.

X.

Heer wur a fall fro' a kiss to a kick like
 Saätan as fell
 Down out o' heaven i' Hell-fire—thaw
 theer's naw drinkin' i' Hell ;
 Meä fur to kick our Sally as kep the wolf
 fro' the door,
 All along o' the drink, fur I loov'd 'er
 as well as afoor.

XI.

Sa like a greät num-cumpus I blubber'd
 awaäy o' the bed—
 'Weänt niver do it naw moor ;' an'
 Sally looökt up an' she said,
 'I'll upowd it¹ tha weänt ; thou'rt like
 the rest o' the men,
 Thou'll goä sniffin' about the tap till tha
 does it agëan.
 Theer's thy hennemy, man, an' I knaws,
 as knaws tha sa well,
 That, if tha seeäs 'im an' smells 'im tha'll
 foller 'im slick into Hell.'

XII.

'Naäy,' says I, 'fur I weänt goä sniffin'
 about the tap.'
 'Weänt tha?' she says, an' mysen I
 thowt i' mysen 'mayhap.'
 'Noä : ' an' I started awaäy like a shot,
 an' down to the Hinn,
 An' I browt what tha seeäs stannin' theer,
 yon big black bottle o' gin.

XIII.

'That caps owt,'² says Sally, an' saw she
 begins to cry,
 But I puts it inter 'er 'ands an' I says to
 'er, 'Sally,' says I,
 'Stan' 'im theer i' the naäme o' the Lord
 an' the power ov 'is Graäce,
 Stan' 'im theer, fur I'll looök my hennemy
 strait i' the faäce,

¹ I'll uphold it.² That's beyond everything.

Stan' 'im theer i' the winder, an' let ma
looök at 'im then,
'E seeäms naw moor nor watter, an' 'e's
the Divil's oän sen.'

XIV.

An' I wur down i' tha mouth, couldn't do
naw work an' all,
Nasty an' snaggy an' shaäky, an' poonch'd
my 'and wi' the hawl,
But she wur a power o' coomfut, an'
sattled 'ersen o' my knee,
An' coäxd an' coodled me oop till ageän
I feel'd mysen free.

XV.

An' Sally she tell'd it about, an' foälk
stood a-gawmin'¹ in,
As thaw it wur summat bewitch'd istead
of a quart o' gin;
An' some on 'em said it wur watter—an'
I wur chousin' the wife,
Fur I couldn't 'owd 'ands off gin, wur it
nobbut to saäve my life;
An' blacksmith 'e strips me the thick ov
'is airm, an' 'e shaws it to me,
'Feäl thou this! thou can't graw this
upo' watter!' says he.
An' Doctor 'e calls o' Sunday an' just as
candles was lit,
'Thou moänt do it,' he says, 'tha mun
breäk 'im off bit by bit.'
'Thou'rt but a Methody-man,' says Par-
son, and laäys down 'is 'at,
An' 'e points to the bottle o' gin, 'but I
respecks tha fur that;'
An' Squire, his oän very sen, walks down
fro' the 'All to see,
An' 'e spansks 'is 'and into mine, 'fur I
respecks tha,' says 'e;
An' coostom ageän draw'd in like a wind
fro' far an' wide,
And browt me the booöts to be cobbled
fro' hafe the coontryside.

XVI.

An' theer 'e stans an' theer 'e shall stan
to my dying daäy;

¹ Staring vacantly.

I 'a gotten to loov 'im ageän in anooother
kind of a waäy,
Proud on 'im, like, my lad, an' I keeäps
'im cleän an' bright,
Loovs 'im, an' roobs 'im, an' doosts 'im,
an' puts 'im back i' the light.

XVII.

Wouldn't a pint a' sarved as well as a
quart? Naw doubt:
But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi' an'
fowt it out.
Fine an' meller 'e mun be by this, if I
cared to taäste,
But I moänt, my lad, and I weänt, fur
I'd feäl mysen cleän disgräced.

XVIII.

An' once I said to the Missis, 'My lass,
when I cooms to die,
Smash the bottle to smithers, the Divil's
in 'im,' said I.
But arter I chaänged my mind, an' if
Sally be left aloän,
I'll hev 'im a-buried wi'mma an' taäke
'im afoor the Throän.

XIX.

Coom thou 'eer—yon laädy a-steppin'
along the streeät,
Doesn't tha know 'er—sa pratty, an' feät,
an' neät, an' sweëät?
Look at the cloäths on 'er back, thebbe
ammost spick-span-new,
An' Tommy's faäce be as fresh as a codlin
wesh'd i' the dew.

XX.

'Ere be our Sally an' Tommy, an' we be
a-goin to dine,
Baäcon an' taätes, an' a beslings pud-
din'¹ an' Adam's wine;
But if tha wants ony grog tha mun goä
fur it down to the Hinn,
Fur I weänt shed a drop on 'is blood,
noä, not fur Sally's oän kin.

¹ A pudding made with the first milk of the cow
after calving.

THE REVENGE.

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET.

I.

AT FLORES in the Azores Sir Richard
Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came
flying from far away :
'Spanish ships of war at sea ! we have
sighted fifty-three !'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard :
'Fore God I am no coward ;
But I cannot meet them here, for my
ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must
fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line ; can we
fight with fifty-three ?'

II.

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : 'I
know you are no coward ;
You fly them for a moment to fight with
them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are
lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left
them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devil-
doms of Spain.'

III.

So Lord Howard past away with five
ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent
summer heaven ;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick
men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down
below ;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they
were not left to Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the
glory of the Lord.

IV.

He had only a hundred seamen to work
the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the
Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon
the weather bow.
'Shall we fight or shall we fly ?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die !
There'll be little of us left by the time
this sun be set.'
And Sir Richard said again : 'We be all
good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the
children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or
devil yet.'

V.

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and
we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the
heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and
her ninety sick below ;
For half of their fleet to the right and
half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the
long sea-lane between.

VI.

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down
from their decks and laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at
the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that,
of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with
her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we
stay'd.

VII.

And while now the great San Philip hung
above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,

Four galleons drew away
 From the Spanish fleet that day,
 And two upon the larboard and two upon
 the starboard lay,
 And the battle-thunder broke from them
 all.

VIII.

But anon the great San Philip, she be-
 thought herself and went
 Having that within her womb that had
 left her ill content ;
 And the rest they came aboard us, and
 they fought us hand to hand,
 For a dozen times they came with their
 pikes and musqueteers,
 And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a
 dog that shakes his ears
 When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX.

And the sun went down, and the stars
 came out far over the summer sea,
 But never a moment ceased the fight of
 the one and the fifty-three.
 Ship after ship, the whole night long,
 their high-built galleons came,
 Ship after ship, the whole night long,
 with her battle-thunder and flame ;
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew
 back with her dead and her shame.
 For some were sunk and many were shat-
 ter'd, and so could fight us no
 more—
 God of battles, was ever a battle like this
 in the world before ?

X.

For he said ' Fight on ! fight on ! '
 Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck ;
 And it chanced that, when half of the
 short summer night was gone,
 With a grisly wound to be drest he had
 left the deck,
 But a bullet struck him that was dressing
 it suddenly dead,
 And himself he was wounded again in the
 side and the head,
 And he said ' Fight on ! fight on ! '

XI.

And the night went down, and the sun
 smiled out far over the summer sea,
 And the Spanish fleet with broken sides
 lay round us all in a ring ;
 But they dared not touch us again, for
 they fear'd that we still could sting,
 So they watch'd what the end would be.
 And we had not fought them in vain,
 But in perilous plight were we,
 Seeing forty of our poor hundred were
 slain,
 And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
 In the crash of the cannonades and the
 desperate strife ;
 And the sick men down in the hold were
 most of them stark and cold,
 And the pikes were all broken or bent,
 and the powder was all of it spent ;
 And the masts and the rigging were lying
 over the side ;
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
 ' We have fought such a fight for a day
 and a night
 As may never be fought again !
 We have won great glory, my men !
 And a day less or more
 At sea or ashore,
 We die—does it matter when ?
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink
 her, split her in twain !
 Fall into the hands of God, not into the
 hands of Spain ! '

XII.

And the gunner said ' Ay, ay, ' but the
 seamen made reply :
 ' We have children, we have wives,
 And the Lord hath spared our lives.
 We will make the Spaniard promise, if
 we yield, to let us go ;
 We shall live to fight again and to strike
 another blow.'
 And the lion there lay dying, and they
 yielded to the foe.

XIII.

And the stately Spanish men to their
 flagship bore him then,

Where they laid him by the mast, old
 Sir Richard caught at last,
 And they praised him to his face with
 their courtly foreign grace ;
 But he rose upon their decks, and he cried :
 ' I have fought for Queen and Faith like
 a valiant man and true ;
 I have only done my duty as a man is
 bound to do :
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Gren-
 ville die !'
 And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV.

And they stared at the dead that had
 been so valiant and true,
 And had holden the power and glory of
 Spain so cheap
 That he dared her with one little ship
 and his English few ;
 Was he devil or man ? He was devil
 for aught they knew,
 But they sank his body with honour down
 into the deep,
 And they mann'd the Revenge with a
 swarthier alien crew,
 And away she sail'd with her loss and
 long'd for her own ;
 When a wind from the lands they had
 ruin'd awoke from sleep,
 And the water began to heave and the
 weather to moan,
 And or ever that evening ended a great
 gale blew,
 And a wave like the wave that is raised
 by an earthquake grew,
 Till it smote on their hulls and their sails
 and their masts and their flags,
 And the whole sea plunged and fell on
 the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,
 And the little Revenge herself went down
 by the island crags
 To be lost evermore in the main.

THE SISTERS.

THEY have left the doors ajar ; and by
 their clash,
 And prelude on the keys, I know the
 song,

Their favourite—which I call 'The Tables
 Turned.'
 Evelyn begins it 'O diviner Air.'

EVELYN.

O diviner Air,
 Thro' the heat, the drowth, the dust, the
 glare,
 Far from out the west in shadowing
 showers,
 Over all the meadow baked and bare,
 Making fresh and fair
 All the bowers and the flowers,
 Fainting flowers, faded bowers,
 Over all this weary world of ours,
 Breathe, diviner Air !

A sweet voice that—you scarce could
 better that.
 Now follows Edith echoing Evelyn.

EDITH.

O diviner light,
 Thro' the cloud that roofs our noon with
 night,
 Thro' the blotting mist, the blinding
 showers,
 Far from out a sky for ever bright,
 Over all the woodland's flooded bowers,
 Over all the meadow's drowning flowers,
 Over all this ruin'd world of ours,
 Break, diviner light !

Marvellously like, their voices—and them-
 selves !

Tho' one is somewhat deeper than the
 other,

As one is somewhat graver than the other—
 Edith than Evelyn. Your good Uncle,
 whom

You count the father of your fortune,
 longs

For this alliance : let me ask you then,
 Which voice most takes you ? for I do
 not doubt

Being a watchful parent, you are taken
 With one or other : tho' sometimes I
 fear

You may be flickering, fluttering in a
 doubt

Between the two—which must not be—
which might

Be death to one : they both are beautiful :
Evelyn is gayer, wittier, prettier, says
The common voice, if one may trust it :
she ?

No ! but the paler and the graver, Edith.
Woo her and gain her then : no waver-
ing, boy !

The graver is perhaps the one for you
Who jest and laugh so easily and so well.
For love will go by contrast, as by likes.

No sisters ever prized each other more.
Not so : their mother and her sister loved
More passionately still.

But that my best
And oldest friend, your Uncle, wishes it,
And that I know you worthy everyway
To be my son, I might, perchance, be loath
To part them, or part from them : and
yet one

Should marry, or all the broad lands in
your view

From this bay window—which our house
has held

Three hundred years—will pass collater-
ally.

My father with a child on either knee,
A hand upon the head of either child,
Smoothing their locks, as golden as his
own

Were silver, 'get them wedded' would
he say.

And once my prattling Edith ask'd him
'why ?'

Ay, why ? said he, 'for why should I go
lame ?'

Then told them of his wars, and of his
wound.

For see—this wine—the grape from
whence it flow'd

Was blackening on the slopes of Portugal,
When that brave soldier, down the terrible
ridge

Plunged in the last fierce charge at
Waterloo,

And caught the laming bullet. He left
me this,

Which yet retains a memory of its youth,
As I of mine, and my first passion.
Come !

Here's to your happy union with my child !

Yet must you change your name : no
fault of mine !

You say that you can do it as willingly
As birds make ready for their bridal-
time

By change of feather : for all that, my
boy,

Some birds are sick and sullen when they
moult.

An old and worthy name ! but mine that
stirr'd

Among our civil wars and earlier too
Among the Roses, the more venerable.
I care not for a name—no fault of mine.
Once more—a happier marriage than my
own !

You see yon Lombard poplar on the
plain.

The highway running by it leaves a breadth
Of sward to left and right, where, long
ago,

One bright May morning in a world of
song,

I lay at leisure, watching overhead
The aërial poplar wave, an amber spire.

I dozed ; I woke. An open landaulet
Whirl'd by, which, after it had past me,
show'd

Turning my way, the loveliest face on
earth.

The face of one there sitting opposite,
On whom I brought a strange unhappi-
ness,

That time I did not see.

Love at first sight
May seem—with goodly rhyme and
reason for it—

Possible—at first glimpse, and for a face
Gone in a moment—strange. Yet once,
when first

I came on lake Llanberris in the dark,
A moonless night with storm—one light-
ning-fork

Flash'd out the lake ; and tho' I loiter'd
there

The full day after, yet in retrospect
That less than momentary thunder-sketch
Of lake and mountain conquers all the day.

The Sun himself has limn'd the face
for me.

Not quite so quickly, no, nor half as well.
For look you here—the shadows are too
deep,

And like the critic's blurring comment
make

The veriest beauties of the work appear
The darkest faults : the sweet eyes frown :
the lips

Seem but a gash. My sole memorial
Of Edith—no, the other,—both indeed.

So that bright face was flash'd thro'
sense and soul

And by the poplar vanish'd—to be found
Long after, as it seem'd, beneath the tall
Tree-bowers, and those long-sweeping
beechen boughs

Of our New Forest. I was there alone:
The phantom of the whirling landaulet
For ever past me by : when one quick
peal

Of laughter drew me thro' the glimmer-
ing glades

Down to the snowlike sparkle of a cloth
On fern and foxglove. Lo, the face again,
My Rosalind in this Arden—Edith—all
One bloom of youth, health, beauty,
happiness,

And moved to merriment at a passing jest.

There one of those about her knowing
me

Call'd me to join them ; so with these I
spent

What seem'd my crowning hour, my day
of days.

I woo'd her then, nor unsuccessfully,
The worse for her, for me ! was I content ?
Ay—no, not quite ; for now and then I
thought

Laziness, vague love-longings, the bright
May,

Had made a heated haze to magnify
The charm of Edith—that a man's ideal
Is high in Heaven, and lodged with
Plato's God,
Not findable here—content, and not con-
tent,

In some such fashion as a man may be
That having had the portrait of his friend
Drawn by an artist, looks at it, and says,
' Good ! very like ! not altogether he.'

As yet I had not bound myself by
words,

Only, believing I loved Edith, made
Edith love *me*. Then came the day
when I,

Flattering myself that all my doubts were
fools

Born of the fool this Age that doubts of
all—

Not I that day of Edith's love or mine—
Had braced my purpose to declare my-
self :

I stood upon the stairs of Paradise.
The golden gates would open at a word.
I spoke it—told her of my passion, seen
And lost and found again, had got so far,
Had caught her hand, her eyelids fell—I
heard

Wheels, and a noise of welcome at the
doors—

On a sudden after two Italian years
Had set the blossom of her health again,
The younger sister, Evelyn, enter'd—
there,

There was the face, and altogether she.
The mother fell about the daughter's
neck,

The sisters closed in one another's arms,
Their people throng'd about them from
the hall,

And in the thick of question and reply
I fled the house, driven by one angel face,
And all the Furies.

I was bound to her ;
I could not free myself in honour—bound
Not by the sounded letter of the word,
But counterpressures of the yielded hand
That timorously and faintly echoed mine,

Quick blushes, the sweet dwelling of her
 eyes
 Upon me when she thought I did not
 see—
 Were these not bonds? nay, nay, but
 could I wed her
 Loving the other? do her that great
 wrong?
 Had I not dream'd I loved her yester-
 morn?
 Had I not known where Love, at first a
 fear,
 Grew after marriage to full height and
 form?
 Yet after marriage, that mock-sister
 there—
 Brother-in-law—the fiery nearness of it—
 Unlawful and disloyal brotherhood—
 What end but darkness could ensue from
 this
 For all the three? So Love and Honour
 jarr'd
 Tho' Love and Honour join'd to raise
 the full
 High-tide of doubt that sway'd me up
 and down
 Advancing nor retreating.

Edith wrote :

'My mother bids me ask' (I did not tell
 you—
 A widow with less guile than many a child.
 God help the wrinkled children that are
 Christ's
 As well as the plump cheek—she wrought
 us harm,
 Poor soul, not knowing) 'are you ill?'
 (so ran
 The letter) 'you have not been here of
 late.
 You will not find me here. At last I go
 On that long-promised visit to the North.
 I told your wayside story to my mother
 And Evelyn. She remembers you.
 Farewell.
 Pray come and see my mother. Almost
 blind
 With ever-growing cataract, yet she thinks
 She sees you when she hears. Again
 farewell.'

Cold words from one I had hoped to
 warm so far
 That I could stamp my image on her
 heart!
 'Pray come and see my mother, and
 farewell.'
 Cold, but as welcome as free airs of
 heaven
 After a dungeon's closeness. Selfish,
 strange!
 What dwarfs are men! my strangled
 vanity
 Utter'd a stifled cry—to have vex't myself
 And all in vain for her—cold heart or
 none—
 No bride for me. Yet so my path was
 clear
 To win the sister.

Whom I woo'd and won.

For Evelyn knew not of my former suit,
 Because the simple mother work'd upon
 By Edith pray'd me not to whisper of it.
 And Edith would be bridesmaid on the
 day.

But on that day, not being all at ease,
 I from the altar glancing back upon her,
 Before the first 'I will' was utter'd, saw
 The bridesmaid pale, statuelike, passion-
 less—

'No harm, no harm' I turn'd again, and
 placed
 My ring upon the finger of my bride.

So, when we parted, Edith spoke no
 word,
 She wept no tear, but round my Evelyn
 clung
 In utter silence for so long, I thought
 'What, will she never set her sister free?'

We left her, happy each in each, and
 then,
 As tho' the happiness of each in each
 Were not enough, must fain have torrents,
 lakes,
 Hills, the great things of Nature and the
 fair,
 To lift us as it were from commonplace,
 And help us to our joy. Better have
 sent

Our Edith thro' the glories of the earth,
To change with her horizon, if true Love
Were not his own imperial all-in-all.

Far off we went. My God, I would
not live
Save that I think this gross hard-seeming
world
Is our misshaping vision of the Powers
Behind the world, that make our griefs
our gains.

For on the dark night of our marriage-
day
The great Tragedian, that had quench'd
herself
In that assumption of the bridesmaid—
she
That loved me—our true Edith—her
brain broke
With over-acting, till she rose and fled
Beneath a pitiless rush of Autumn rain
To the deaf church—to be let in—to pray
Before *that* altar—so I think; and there
They found her beating the hard Protest-
ant doors.
She died and she was buried ere we
knew.

I learnt it first. I had to speak. At
once
The bright quick smile of Evelyn, that
had sunn'd
The morning of our marriage, past away:
And on our home-return the daily want
Of Edith in the house, the garden, still
Haunted us like her ghost; and by and
by,
Either from that necessity for talk
Which lives with blindness, or plain
innocence
Of nature, or desire that her lost child
Should earn from both the praise of
heroism,
The mother broke her promise to the
dead,
And told the living daughter with what
love
Edith had welcomed my brief wooing of
her,
And all her sweet self-sacrifice and death.

T

Henceforth that mystic bond betwixt
the twins—
Did I not tell you they were twins?—
prevail'd
So far that no caress could win my wife
Back to that passionate answer of full
heart
I had from her at first. Not that her love,
Tho' scarce as great as Edith's power of
love,
Had lessen'd, but the mother's garrulous
wail
For ever woke the unhappy Past again,
Till that dead bridesmaid, meant to be
my bride,
Put forth cold hands between us, and I
feard
The very fountains of her life were
chill'd;
So took her thence, and brought her
here, and here
She bore a child, whom reverently we
call'd
Edith; and in the second year was born
A second—this I named from her own
self,
Evelyn; then two weeks—no more—she
joined,
In and beyond the grave, that one she
loved.

Now in this quiet of declining life,
Thro' dreams by night and trances of the
day,
The sisters glide about me hand in hand,
Both beautiful alike, nor can I tell
One from the other, no, nor care to tell
One from the other, only know they
come,
They smile upon me, till, remembering
all
The love they both have borne me, and
the love
I bore them both—divided as I am
From either by the stillness of the grave—
I know not which of these I love the
best.

But *you* love Edith; and her own true
eyes
Are traitors to her; our quick Evelyn—

2 L

The merrier, prettier, wittier, as they
talk,
And not without good reason, my good
son—
Is yet untouch'd : and I that hold them
both
Dearest of all things—well, I am not
sure—
But if there lie a preference eitherway,
And in the rich vocabulary of Love
'Most dearest' be a true superlative—
I think I likewise love your Edith most.

THE VILLAGE WIFE; OR, THE ENTAIL.¹

I.

'OUSE-KEEPER sent tha my lass, fur New
Squire coom'd last night.
Butter an' heggs—yis—yis. I'll goä wi'
tha back : all right ;
Butter I warrants be prime, an' I war-
rants the heggs be as well,
Hafe a pint o' milk runs out when ya
breäks the shell.

II.

Sit thysen down fur a bit : hev a glass o'
cowslip wine !
I liked the owd Squire an' 'is gells as
thaw they was gells o' mine,
Fur then we was all es one, the Squire
an' 'is darters an' me,
Hall but Miss Annie, the heldest, I niver
not took to she :
But Nelly, the last of the cletch,² I liked
'er the fust on 'em all,
Fur hoffens we talkt o' my darter es died
o' the fever at fall :
An' I thowt 'twur the will o' the Lord, but
Miss Annie she said it wur draäins,
Fur she hedn't naw coomfut in 'er, an'
arn'd naw thanks fur 'er paäins.
Eh ! thebbe all wi' the Lord my childer,
I han't gotten none !
Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is tääl in 'is
'and, an' owd Squire's gone.

¹ See note to 'Northern Cobbler.'

² A brood of chickens.

III.

Fur 'staäte be i' tääl, my lass : tha dosn'
knew what that be ?
But I knows the law, I does, for the
lawyer ha tow'd it me.
'When theer's naw 'eäd to a 'Ouse by
the fault o' that ere maäle—
The gells they counts fur nowt, and the
next un he taäkes the tääl.'

IV.

What be the next un like ? can tha tell
ony harm on 'im lass ?—
Naay sit down—naw 'urry—sa cowl !—
hev another glass !
Straänge an' cowl fur the time ! we may
happen a fall o' snaw—
Not es I cares fur to hear ony harm, but
I likes to know.
An' I 'oäps es 'e beänt boooklarn'd : but
'e dosn' not coom fro' the shere ;
We'd anew o' that wi' the Squire, an' we
haätes boooklarnin' ere.

V.

Fur Squire wur a Varsity scholard, an'
niver lookt arter the land—
Whoäts o' tonups or taätes—'e 'ed hallus
a booök i' 'is 'and,
Hallus aloän wi' 'is booöks, thaw nigh
upo' seventy year.
An' booöks, what's booöks ? thou knows
thebbe naither 'ere nor theer.

VI.

An' the gells, they hedn't naw tääls, an'
the lawyer he tow'd it me
That 'is tääl were soä tied up es he
couldn't cut down a tree !
'Drat the trees,' says I, to be sewer I
haätes 'em, my lass,
Fur we puts the muck o' the land an'
they sucks the muck fro' the grass.

VII.

An' Squire wur hallus a-smilin', an' gied
to the tramps goin' by—
An' all o' the wust i' the parish—wi'
hoffens a drop in 'is eye.

An' ivry darter o' Squire's hed her awn
ridin-erse to 'ersen,
An' they rampaged about wi' their grooms,
an' was 'untin' arter the men,
An' hallus a-dallackt¹ an' dizen'd out,
an' a-buyin' new cloäthes,
While 'e sit like a greät glimmer-gowk²
wi' 'is glasses athurt 'is noäse,
An' 'is noäse sa grufted wi' snuff es it
couldn't be scroob'd awaäy,
Fur atween 'is reädin' an' writin' 'e snifft
up a box in a daäy,
An' 'e niver runn'd arter the fox, nor
arter the birds wi' 'is gun,
An' 'e niver not shot one 'are, but 'e
leäved it to Charlie 'is son,
An' 'e niver not fish'd 'is awn ponds, but
Charlie 'e cotch'd the pike,
For 'e warn't not burn to the land, an' 'e
didn't take kind to it like;
But I ears es 'e'd gie fur a howry³ owd
book thutty pound an' moor,
An' 'e'd wrote an owd book, his awn sen,
sa I knaw'd es 'e'd coom to be poor;
An' 'e gied—I be fear'd fur to tell tha 'ow
much—fur an owd scratted stoän,
An' 'e digg'd up a loomp i' the land an'
'e got a brown pot an' a boän,
An' 'e bowt owd money, es wouldn't goä,
wi' good gowd o' the Queen,
An' 'e bowt little statutes all-naäkt an'
which was a shaame to be seen;
But 'e niver looökt ower a bill, nor 'e
niver not seed to owt,
An' 'e niver knawd nowt but booöks, an'
booöks, as thou knaws, beänt nowt.

VIII.

But owd Squire's laädy es long es she
lived she kep 'em all clear,
Thaw es long es she lived I niver hed
none of 'er darters 'ere;
But arter she died we was all es one, the
childer an' me,
An' sarvints runn'd in an' out, an' offens
we hed 'em to tea.
Lawk! 'ow I laugh'd when the lasses 'ud
talk o' their Missis's waäys,

¹ Overdrest in gay colours.² Owl.³ Filthy.

An' the Missis talk'd o' the lasses.—I'll
tell tha some o' these daäys.
Hoänly Miss Annie were saw stuck oop,
like 'er mother a'oor—
'Er an' 'er blessed darter—they niver
derken'd my door.

IX.

An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled till 'e'd
gotten a fright at last,
An' 'e calls fur 'is son, fur the 'turney's
letters they foller'd sa fast;
But Squire wur afeard o' 'is son, an' 'e
says to 'im, meek as a mouse,
'Lad, thou mun cut off thy taäil, or the
gells 'ull goä to the 'Ouse,
Fur I finds es I be that i' debt, es I 'oäps
es thou'll 'elp me a bit,
An' if thou'll 'gree to cut off thy taäil I
may saäve mysen yit.'

X.

But Charlie 'e sets back 'is ears, an' 'e
sweärs, an' 'e says to 'im 'Noa.
I've gotten the 'staäte by the taäil an'
be dang'd if I iver let goa!
Coom! coom! feyther,' 'e says, 'why
shouldn't thy booöks be sowd?
I hears es soom o' thy booöks mebbe
worth their weight i' gowd.'

XI.

Heäps an' heäps o' booöks, I ha' see'd
'em, belong'd to the Squire,
But the lasses 'ed teärd out leaves i' the
middle to kindle the fire;
Sa moäst on 'is owd big booöks fetch'd
nigh to nowt at the saäle,
And Squire were at Charlie ageän to git
'im to cut off 'is taäil.

XII.

Ya wouldn't find Charlie's likes—'e were
that outdacious at 'oäm,
Not thaw ya went fur to räake out Hell
wi' a small-tooth coämb—
Droonk wi' the Quoloty's wine, an' droonk
wi' the farmer's aäle,
Mad wi' the lasses an' all—an' 'e wouldn't
cut off the taäil.

XIII.

Thou's coom'd oop by the beck ; and a
 thurn be a-grawin' theer,
 I niver ha seed it sa white wi' the Maäy
 es I see'd it to-year—
 Theerabouts Charlie joompt—and it gied
 me a scare tother night,
 Fur I thowt it wur Charlie's ghoäst i'
 the derk, fur it looökt sa white.
 'Billy,' says 'e, 'hev a joomp !'—thaw
 the banks o' the beck be sa high,
 Fur he ca'd 'is 'erse Billy-rough-un, thaw
 niver a hair wur awry ;
 But Billy fell bakkuds o' Charlie, an'
 Charlie 'e brok 'is neck,
 Sa theer wur a hend o' the taäil, fur 'e
 lost 'is taäil i' the beck.

XIV.

Sa 'is taäil wur lost an' 'is booöks wur
 gone an' 'is boy wur deäd,
 An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled, but 'e
 niver not lift oop 'is 'eäd :
 Hallus a soft un Squire ! an' 'e smiled,
 fur 'e hedn't naw friend,
 Sa feyther an' son was buried together,
 an' this wur the hend.

XV.

An' Parson as hesn't the call, nor the
 mooney, but hes the pride,
 'E reäds of a sewer an' sartan 'oäp o' the
 tother side ;
 But I beänt that sewer es the Lord, how-
 siver they praäy'd an' praäy'd,
 Lets them inter 'eaven eäsy es leäves their
 debts to be pääd.
 Siver the mou'ds rattled down upo' poor
 owd Squire i' the wood,
 An' I cried along wi' the gells, fur they
 weänt niver coom to naw good.

XVI.

Fur Molly the long un she walkt awaäy
 wi' a hofficer lad,
 An' nawbody 'eärd on 'er sin, sa o' coorse
 she be gone to the bad !
 An' Lucy wur lääme o' one leg, sweet-
 'arts she niver 'ed none—

Straänge an' unheppen¹ Miss-Lucy ! we
 naämed her 'Dot an' gaw one !'
 An' Hetty wur weak i' the hattics, wi'out
 ony harm i' the legs,
 An' the fever 'ed baäked Jinny's 'eäd as
 bald as one o' them heggs,
 An' Nelly wur up fro' the craädle as big
 i' the mouth as a cow,
 An' saw she mun hammergrate,² lass, or
 she weänt git a maäte onyhow !
 An' es for Miss Annie es call'd me afoor
 my awn foälsks to my faäce
 'A hignorant village wife as 'ud hev to
 be larn'd her awn plaäce,'
 Hes fur Miss Hannie the heldest hes now
 be a-grawin' sa howd,
 I knaws that mooch o' sheä, es it beänt
 not fit to be towd !

XVII.

Sa I didn't not taäke it kindly ov owd
 Miss Annie to sääy
 Es I should be talkin ageän 'em, es soon
 es they went awaäy,
 Fur, lawks ! 'ow I cried when they went,
 an' our Nelly she gied me 'er 'and,
 Fur I'd ha done owt for the Squire an' 'is
 gells es belong'd to the land ;
 Booöks, es I said afoor, thebbe neyther
 'ere nor theer !
 But I sarved 'em wi' butter an' heggs fur
 huppuds o' twenty year.

XVIII.

An' they hallus pääd what I hax'd, sa I
 hallus deal'd wi' the Hall,
 An' they knaw'd what butter wur, an' they
 knaw'd what a hegg wur an' all ;
 Hugger-mugger they lived, but they
 wasn't that eäsy to pleäse,
 Till I gied 'em Hinjian curn, an' they
 lääd big heggs es tha seas ;
 An' I niver puts sääme³ i' my butter,
 they does it at Willis's farm,
 Taäste another drop o' the wine—tweänt
 do tha naw harm.

¹ Ungainly, awkward.² Emigrate.³ Lard.

XIX.

Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taail in 'is
'and, an' owd Squire's gone ;
I heard 'im a roomlin' by, but arter my
nightcap wur on ;
Sa I han't clapt eyes on 'im yit, fur he
coom'd last night sa laâte—
Pluksh !!¹ the hens i' the peäs ! why
didn't tha hesp the gaäte ?

IN THE CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL.

EMMIE.

I.

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never
had seen him before,
But he sent a chill to my heart when I
saw him come in at the door,
Fresh from the surgery-schools of France
and of other lands—
Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big
merciless hands !
Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but
they said too of him
He was happier using the knife than in
trying to save the limb,
And that I can well believe, for he look'd
so coarse and so red,
I could think he was one of those who
would break their jests on the dead,
And mangle the living dog that had loved
him and fawn'd at his knee—
Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that
ever such things should be !

II.

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of
our children would die
But for the voice of Love, and the smile,
and the comforting eye—
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone
seem'd out of its place—
Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all
but a hopeless case :

¹ A cry accompanied by a clapping of hands to
scare trespassing fowl.

And he handled him gently enough ; but
his voice and his face were not kind,
And it was but a hopeless case, he had
seen it and made up his mind,
And he said to me roughly 'The lad will
need little more of your care.'
'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek
the Lord Jesus in prayer ;
They are all his children here, and I pray
for them all as my own :'
But he turn'd to me, 'Ay, good woman,
can prayer set a broken bone ?'
Then he mutter'd half to himself, but I
know that I heard him say
'All very well—but the good Lord Jesus
has had his day.'

III.

HAD ? has it come ? It has only dawn'd.
It will come by and by.
O how could I serve in the wards if the
hope of the world were a lie ?
How could I bear with the sights and the
loathsome smells of disease
But that He said 'Ye do it to me, when
ye do it to these ?'

IV.

So he went. And we past to this ward
where the younger children are laid :
Here is the cot of our orphan, our dar-
ling, our meek little maid ;
Empty you see just now ! We have lost
her who loved her so much—
Patient of pain tho' as quick as a sensitive
plant to the touch ;
Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often
moved me to tears,
Hers was the gratefullest heart I have
found in a child of her years—
Nay you remember our Emmie ; you used
to send her the flowers ;
How she would smile at 'em, play with
'em, talk to 'em hours after hours !
They that can wander at will where the
works of the Lord are reveal'd
Little guess what joy can be got from a
cowslip out of the field ;
Flowers to these 'spirits in prison' are all
they can know of the spring,

They freshen and sweeten the wards like
the waft of an Angel's wing ;
And she lay with a flower in one hand and
her thin hands crost on her breast—
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire,
and we thought her at rest,
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor
said ' Poor little dear,
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow ; she'll
never live thro' it, I fear.'

V.

I walk'd with our kindly old doctor as
far as the head of the stair,
Then I return'd to the ward ; the child
didn't see I was there.

VI.

Never since I was nurse, had I been so
grieved and so vex't !
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call'd
from her cot to the next,
' He says I shall never live thro' it, O
Annie, what shall I do ?'
Annie consider'd. ' If I,' said the wise
little Annie, ' was you,
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to
help me, for, Emmie, you see,
It's all in the picture there : " Little
children should come to me."'

(Meaning the print that you gave us, I
find that it always can please
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with
children about his knees.)
' Yes, and I will,' said Emmie, ' but then
if I call to the Lord,
How should he know that it's me ? such
a lot of beds in the ward !'

That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she
consider'd and said :
' Emmie, you put out your arms, and you
leave 'em outside on the bed—
The Lord has so *much* to see to ! but,
Emmie, you tell it him plain,
It's the little girl with her arms lying out
on the counterpane.'

VII.

I had sat three nights by the child—I
could not watch her for four—

My brain had begun to reel—I felt I
could do it no more.
That was my sleeping-night, but I thought
that it never would pass.
There was a thunderclap once, and a
clatter of hail on the glass,
And there was a phantom cry that I heard
as I tost about,
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the
storm and the darkness without ;
My sleep was broken besides with dreams
of the dreadful knife
And fears for our delicate Emmie who
scarce would escape with her life ;
Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd
she stood by me and smiled,
And the doctor came at his hour, and we
went to see to the child.

VIII.

He had brought his ghastly tools : we
believed her asleep again—
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out
on the counterpane ;
Say that His day is done ! Ah why should
we care what they say ?
The Lord of the children had heard her,
and Emmie had past away.

DEDICATORY POEM TO THE
PRINCESS ALICE.

DEAD PRINCESS, living Power, if that,
which lived
True life, live on—and if the fatal kiss,
Born of true life and love, divorce thee
not
From earthly love and life—if what we call
The spirit flash not all at once from out
Thiss shadow into Substance—then perhaps
The mellow'd murmur of the people's
praise
From thine own State, and all our
breadth of realm,
Where Love and Longing dress thy deeds
in light,
Ascends to thee ; and this March morn
that sees
Thy Soldier-brother's bridal orange-bloom

Break thro' the yews and cypress of thy grave,
 And thine Imperial mother smile again,
 May send one ray to thee! and who can tell—
 Thou—England's England-loving daughter—thou
 Dying so English thou wouldst have her flag
 Borne on thy coffin—where is he can swear
 But that some broken gleam from our poor earth
 May touch thee, while remembering thee,
 I lay
 At thy pale feet this ballad of the deeds
 Of England, and her banner in the East?

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW.

I.

BANNER of England, not for a season, O
 banner of Britain, hast thou
 Floated in conquering battle or flap to
 the battle-cry!
 Never with mightier glory than when we
 had rear'd thee on high
 Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly
 siege of Lucknow—
 Shot thro' the staff or the halyard, but
 ever we raised thee anew,
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

II.

Frail were the works that defended the
 hold that we held with our lives—
 Women and children among us, God help
 them, our children and wives!
 Hold it we might—and for fifteen days
 or for twenty at most.
 'Never surrender, I charge you, but
 every man die at his post!'
 Voice of the dead whom we loved, our
 Lawrence the best of the brave:
 Cold were his brows when we kiss'd
 him—we laid him that night in
 his grave.

'Every man die at his post!' and there
 hail'd on our houses and halls
 Death from their rifle-bullets, and death
 from their cannon-balls,
 Death in our innermost chamber, and
 death at our slight barricade,
 Death while we stood with the musket, and
 death while we stooped to the spade,
 Death to the dying, and wounds to the
 wounded, for often there fell,
 Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro'
 it, their shot and their shell,
 Death—for their spies were among us, their
 marksmen were told of our best,
 So that the brute bullet broke thro' the
 brain that could think for the rest;
 Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and
 bullets would rain at our feet—
 Fire from ten thousand at once of the
 rebels that girdled us round—
 Death at the glimpse of a finger from
 over the breadth of a street,
 Death from the heights of the mosque and
 the palace, and death in the ground!
 Mine? yes, a mine! Countermine! down,
 down! and creep thro' the hole!
 Keep the revolver in hand! you can hear
 him—the murderous mole!
 Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of
 the pickaxe be thro'!
 Click with the pick, coming nearer and
 nearer again than before—
 Now let it speak, and you fire, and the
 dark pioneer is no more;
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew!

III.

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many
 times, and it chanced on a day
 Soon as the blast of that underground
 thunderclap echo'd away,
 Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like
 so many fiends in their hell—
 Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on
 volley, and yell upon yell—
 Fiercely on all the defences our myriad
 enemy fell.
 What have they done? where is it? Out
 yonder. Guard the Redan!

Storm at the Water-gate ! storm at the
 Bailey-gate ! storm, and it ran
 Surging and swaying all round us, as
 ocean on every side
 Plunges and heaves at a bank that is
 daily devour'd by the tide—
 So many thousands that if they be bold
 enough, who shall escape ?
 Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall
 know we are soldiers and men !
 Ready ! take aim at their leaders—their
 masses are gapp'd with our grape—
 Backward they reel like the wave, like
 the wave flinging forward again,
 Flying and foil'd at the last by the hand-
 ful they could not subdue ;
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

IV.

Handful of men as we were, we were
 English in heart and in limb,
 Strong with the strength of the race to
 command, to obey, to endure,
 Each of us fought as if hope for the garri-
 son hung but on him ;
 Still—could we watch at all points ? we
 were every day fewer and fewer.
 There was a whisper among us, but only
 a whisper that past :
 'Children and wives—if the tigers leap
 into the fold unawares—
 Every man die at his post—and the foe
 may outlive us at last—
 Better to fall by the hands that they love,
 than to fall into theirs !'
 Roar, upon roar in a moment two mines
 by the enemy sprung
 Clove into perilous chasms our walls and
 our poor palisades.
 Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure
 that your hand be as true !
 Sharp is the fire of assault, better aimed
 are your flank fusillades—
 Twice do we hurl them to earth from the
 ladders to which they had clung,
 Twice from the ditch where they shelter
 we drive them with hand-grenades ;
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

V.

Then on another wild morning another
 wild earthquake out-tore
 Clean from our lines of defence ten or
 twelve good paces or more.
 Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there
 from the light of the sun—
 One has leapt up on the breach, crying
 out : 'Follow me, follow me !'—
 Mark him—he falls ! then another, and
him too, and down goes he.
 Had they been bold enough then, who
 can tell but the traitors had won ?
 Boardings and rafters and doors—an em-
 brace ! make way for the gun !
 Now double-charge it with grape ! It is
 charged and we fire, and they
 run.
 Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the
 dark face have his due !
 Thanks to the kindly dark faces who
 fought with us, faithful and few,
 Fought with the bravest among us, and
 drove them, and smote them, and
 slew,
 That ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner in India blew.

VI.

Men will forget what we suffer and not
 what we do. We can fight !
 But to be soldier all day and be sentinel
 all thro' the night—
 Ever the mine and assault, our sallies,
 their lying alarms,
 Bugles and drums in the darkness, and
 shoutings and soundings to arms,
 Ever the labour of fifty that had to be
 done by five,
 Ever the marvel among us that one should
 be left alive,
 Ever the day with its traitorous death
 from the loopholes around,
 Ever the night with its coffinless corpse
 to be laid in the ground,
 Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge
 of cataract skies,
 Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite
 torment of flies,

Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing
 over an English field,
 Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound
 that *would* not be heal'd,
 Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-
 pitiless knife,—
 Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never
 could save us a life.
 Valour of delicate women who tended the
 hospital bed,
 Horror of women in travail among the
 dying and dead,
 Grief for our perishing children, and
 never a moment for grief,
 Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering
 hopes of relief,
 Havelock baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd
 for all that we knew—
 Then day and night, day and night, coming
 down on the still-shatter'd walls
 Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands
 of cannon-balls—
 But ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

VII.

Hark cannonade, fusillade! is it true what
 was told by the scout,
 Outram and Havelock breaking their way
 through the fell mutineers?
 Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing
 again in our ears!
 All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubi-
 lant shout,
 Havelock's glorious Highlanders answer
 with conquering cheers,
 Sick from the hospital echo them, women
 and children come out,
 Blessing the wholesome white faces of
 Havelock's good fusileers,
 Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the
 Highlander wet with their tears!
 Dance to the pibroch!—saved! we are
 saved!—is it you? is it you?
 Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved
 by the blessing of Heaven!
 'Hold it for fifteen days!' we have held
 it for eighty-seven!
 And ever aloft on the palace roof the old
 banner of England blew.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, LORD
COBHAM.

(IN WALES.)

My friend should meet me somewhere
 hereabout
 To take me to that hiding in the hills.

I have broke their cage, no gilded one,
 I trow—
 I read no more the prisoner's mute wail
 Scribbled or carved upon the pitiless stone;
 I find hard rocks, hard life, hard cheer, or
 none,
 For I am emptier than a friar's brains;
 But God is with me in this wilderness,
 These wet black passes and foam-churn-
 ing chasms—
 And God's free air, and hope of better
 things.

I would I knew their speech; not now
 to glean,
 Not now—I hope to do it—some scatter'd
 ears,
 Some ears for Christ in this wild field of
 Wales—
 But, bread, merely for bread. This
 tongue that wagg'd
 They said with such heretical arrogance
 Against the proud archbishop Arundel—
 So much God's cause was fluent in it—is
 here
 But as a Latin Bible to the crowd;
 'Bara!'—what use? The Shepherd,
 when I speak,
 Vailing a sudden eyelid with his hard
 'Dim Saesneg' passes, wroth at things
 of old—
 No fault of mine. Had he God's word
 in Welsh
 He might be kindlier: happily come the
 day!

Not least art thou, thou little Bethle-
 hem
 In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born;
 Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,
 Least, for in thee the word was born again.

Heaven-sweet Evangel, ever-living
 word,
 Who whilome spakest to the South in
 Greek
 About the soft Mediterranean shores,
 And then in Latin to the Latin crowd,
 As good need was—thou hast come to
 talk our isle.
 Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,
 Must learn to use the tongues of all the
 world.
 Yet art thou thine own witness that thou
 bringest
 Not peace, a sword, a fire.
 What did he say,
 My frightened Wiclif-preacher whom I
 crost
 In flying hither? that one night a crowd
 Throng'd the waste field about the city
 gates :
 The king was on them suddenly with a
 host.
 Why there? they came to hear their
 preacher. Then
 Some cried on Cobham, on the good
 Lord Cobham ;
 Ay, for they love me ! but the king—nor
 voice
 Nor finger raised against him—took and
 hang'd,
 Took, hang'd and burnt—how many—
 thirty-nine—
 Call'd it rebellion—hang'd, poor friends,
 as rebels
 And burn'd alive as heretics ! for your
 Priest
 Labels—to take the king along with
 him—
 All heresy, treason : but to call men
 traitors
 May make men traitors.
 Rose of Lancaster,
 Red in thy birth, redder with household
 war,
 Now reddest with the blood of holy men,
 Redder to be, red rose of Lancaster—
 If somewhere in the North, as Rumour
 sang
 Fluttering the hawks of this crown-lust-
 ing line—

By firth and loch thy silver sister grow,¹
 That were my rose, there my allegiance
 due.
 Self-starved, they say—nay, murder'd,
 doubtless dead.
 So to this king I cleaved : my friend was
 he,
 Once my fast friend : I would have given
 my life
 To help his own from scathe, a thousand
 lives
 To save his soul. He might have come
 to learn
 Our Wiclif's learning : but the worldly
 Priests
 Who fear the king's hard common-sense
 should find
 What rotten piles uphold their mason-
 work,
 Urge him to foreign war. O had he
 will'd
 I might have stricken a lusty stroke for
 him,
 But he would not ; far liever led my
 friend
 Back to the pure and universal church,
 But he would not : whether that heirless
 flaw
 In his throne's title make him feel so
 frail,
 He leans on Antichrist ; or that his mind,
 So quick, so capable in soldiership,
 In matters of the faith, alas the while !
 More worth than all the kingdoms of
 this world,
 Runs in the rut, a coward to the Priest.
 Burnt—good Sir Roger Acton, my
 dear friend !
 Burnt too, my faithful preacher, Beverley !
 Lord give thou power to thy two wit-
 nesses !
 Lest the false faith make merry over
 them !
 Two—nay but thirty-nine have risen and
 stand,
 Dark with the smoke of human sacrifice,
 Before thy light, and cry continually—
 Cry—against whom ?

Him, who should bear the sword
Of Justice—what! the kingly, kindly boy;
Who took the world so easily heretofore,
My boon companion, tavern-fellow—him
Who gibed and japed—in many a merry
tale
That shook our sides—at Pardoners,
Summoners,
Friars, absolution-sellers, monkeries
And nunneries, when the wild hour and
the wine
Had set the wits aflame.

Harry of Monmouth,
Or Amurath of the East?

Better to sink
Thy fleurs-de-lys in slime again, and fling
Thy royalty back into the riotous fits
Of wine and harlotry—thy shame, and
mine,
Thy comrade—than to persecute the
Lord,
And play the Saul that never will be Paul.

Burnt, burnt! and while this mitred
Arundel
Dooms our unlicensed preacher to the
flame,
The mitre-sanction'd harlot draws his
clerks
Into the suburb—their hard celibacy,
Sworn to be veriest ice of pureness, molten
Into adulterous living, or such crimes
As holy Paul—a shame to speak of
them—
Among the heathen—

Sanctuary granted
To bandit, thief, assassin—yea to him
Who hacks his mother's throat—denied
to him,
Who finds the Saviour in his mother
tongue.
The Gospel, the Priest's pearl, flung
down to swine—
The swine, lay-men, lay-women, who
will come,
God willing, to outlearn the filthy friar.
Ah rather, Lord, than that thy Gospel,
meant
To course and range thro' all the world,
should be

Tether'd to these dead pillars of the
Church—

Rather than so, if thou wilt have it so,
Burst vein, snap sinew, and crack heart,
and life

Pass in the fire of Babylon! but how
long,

O Lord, how long!

My friend should meet me here.
Here is the copse, the fountain and—a
Cross!

To thee, dead wood, I bow not head nor
knees.

Rather to thee, green boscage, work of
God,

Black holly, and white-flower'd wayfar-
ing-tree!

Rather to thee, thou living water, drawn
By this good Wiclif mountain down from
heaven,

And speaking clearly in thy native
tongue—

No Latin—He that thirsteth, come and
drink!

Eh! how I anger'd Arundel asking me
To worship Holy Cross! I spread mine
arms,

God's work, I said, a cross of flesh and
blood

And holier. That was heresy. (My good
friend

By this time should be with me.)
'Images?'

'Bury them as God's truer images
Are daily buried.' 'Heresy.—Penance?'

'Fast,
Hairshirt and scourge—nay, let a man
repent,

Do penance in his heart, God hears him.'
'Heresy—

Not shriven, not saved?' 'What profits
an ill Priest

Between me and my God? I would not
spurn

Good counsel of good friends, but shrive
myself

No, not to an Apostle.' 'Heresy.'
(My friend is long in coming.) 'Pil-
grimages?'

'Drink, bagpipes, revelling, devil's-
 dances, vice.
 The poor man's money gone to fat the
 friar.
 Who reads of begging saints in Scripture?'
 —' Heresy '—
 (Hath he been here—not found me—gone
 again?
 Have I mislearnt our place of meeting?)
 'Bread—
 Bread left after the blessing?' how they
 stared,
 That was their main test-question—
 glared at me!
 'He veil'd Himself in flesh, and now He
 veils
 His flesh in bread, body and bread
 together.'
 Then rose the howl of all the cassock'd
 wolves,
 'No bread, no bread. God's body!'
 Archbishop, Bishop,
 Priors, Canons, Friars, bellringers,
 Parish-clerks—
 'No bread, no bread!'—'Authority of
 the Church,
 Power of the keys!'—Then I, God help
 me, I
 So mock'd, so spurn'd, so baited two
 whole days—
 I lost myself and fell from evenness,
 And rail'd at all the Popes, that ever since
 Sylvester shed the venom of world-wealth
 Into the church, had only prov'n them-
 selves
 Poisoners, murderers. Well—God par-
 don all—
 Me, them, and all the world—yea, that
 proud Priest,
 That mock-meek mouth of utter Anti-
 christ,
 That traitor to King Richard and the
 truth,
 Who rose and doom'd me to the fire.
 Amen!
 Nay, I can burn, so that the Lord of life
 Be by me in my death.
 Those three! the fourth
 Was like the Son of God! Not burnt
 were they.

On *them* the smell of burning had not
 past.
 That was a miracle to convert the king.
 These Pharisees, this Caiaphas-Arundel
 What miracle could turn? *He* here
 again,
He thwarting their traditions of Him-
 self,
He would be found a heretic to Himself,
 And doom'd to burn alive.
 So, caught, I burn.
 Burn? heathen men have borne as much
 as this,
 For freedom, or the sake of those they
 loved,
 Or some less cause, some cause far less
 than mine;
 For every other cause is less than mine.
 The moth will singe her wings, and
 singed return,
 Her love of light quenching her fear of
 pain—
 How now, my soul, we do not heed the
 fire?
 Faint-hearted? tut!—faint-stomach'd
 faint as I am,
 God willing, I will burn for Him.
 Who comes?
 A thousand marks are set upon my
 head.
 Friend?—foe perhaps—a tussle for it
 then!
 Nay, but my friend. Thou art so well
 disguised,
 I knew thee not. Hast thou brought
 bread with thee?
 I have not broken bread for fifty hours.
 None? I am damn'd already by the
 Priest
 For holding there was bread where bread
 was none—
 No bread. My friends await me yonder?
 Yes.
 Lead on then. *Up* the mountain? Is
 it far?
 Not far. Climb first and reach me down
 thy hand.
 I am not like to die for lack of bread,
 For I must live to testify by fire.¹

¹ He was burnt on Christmas Day, 1417.

COLUMBUS.

CHAINS, my good lord : in your raised
brows I read
Some wonder at our chamber ornaments.
We brought this iron from our isles of
gold.

Does the king know you deign to visit
him
Whom once he rose from off his throne
to greet
Before his people, like his brother king ?
I saw your face that morning in the crowd.

At Barcelona—tho' you were not then
So bearded. Yes. The city deck'd
herself
To meet me, roar'd my name ; the king,
the queen

Bad me be seated, speak, and tell them all
The story of my voyage, and while I
spoke

The crowd's roar fell as at the 'Peace,
be still !'

And when I ceased to speak, the king,
the queen,

Sank from their thrones, and melted into
tears,

And knelt, and lifted hand and heart and
voice

In praise to God who led me thro' the
waste.

And then the great 'Laudamus' rose to
heaven.

Chains for the Admiral of the Ocean !
chains

For him who gave a new heaven, a new
earth,

As holy John had prophesied of me,
Gave glory and more empire to the kings

Of Spain than all their battles ! chains
for him

Who push'd his prows into the setting sun,
And made West East, and sail'd the

Dragon's mouth,
And came upon the Mountain of the

World,
And saw the rivers roll from Paradise !

Chains ! we are Admirals of the Ocean,
we,

We and our sons for ever. Ferdinand
Hath sign'd it and our Holy Catholic
queen—

Of the Ocean—of the Indies—Admirals
we—

Our title, which we never mean to yield,
Our guerdon not alone for what we did,
But our amends for all we might have
done—

The vast occasion of our stronger life—
Eighteen long years of waste, seven in
your Spain,

Lost, showing courts and kings a truth
the babe

Will suck in with his milk hereafter—
earth

A sphere.

Were *you* at Salamanca ? No.
We fronted there the learning of all
Spain,

All their cosmogonies, their astronomies :
Guess-work *they* guess'd it, but the
golden guess

Is morning-star to the full round of truth.
No guess-work ! I was certain of my goal ;
Some thought it heresy, but that would
not hold.

King David call'd the heavens a hide, a
tent

Spread over earth, and so this earth was
flat :

Some cited old Lactantius : could it be
That trees grew downward, rain fell up-
ward, men

Walk'd like the fly on ceilings ? and be-
sides,

The great Augustine wrote that none
could breathe

Within the zone of heat ; so might there
be

Two Adams, two mankinds, and that
was clean

Against God's word : thus was I beaten
back,

And chiefly to my sorrow by the Church,
And thought to turn my face from Spain,
appeal

Once more to France or England ; but
 our Queen
 Recall'd me, for at last their Highnesses
 Were half-assured this earth might be a
 sphere.

All glory to the all-blessed Trinity,
 All glory to the mother of our Lord,
 And Holy Church, from whom I never
 swerved

Not even by one hair's-breadth of heresy,
 I have accomplish'd what I came to do.

Not yet—not all—last night a dream—
 I sail'd

On my first voyage, harass'd by the frights
 Of my first crew, their curses and their
 groans.

The great flame-banner borne by Tene-
 riffe,

The compass, like an old friend false at last
 In our most need, appall'd them, and the
 wind

Still westward, and the weedy seas—at
 length

The landbird, and the branch with berries
 on it,

The carven staff—and last the light, the
 light

On Guanahani ! but I changed the name ;
 San Salvador I call'd it ; and the light
 Grew as I gazed, and brought out a broad
 sky

Of dawning over—not those alien palms,
 The marvel of that fair new nature—not
 That Indian isle, but our most ancient
 East

Moriah with Jerusalem ; and I saw
 The glory of the Lord flash up, and beat
 Thro' all the homely town from jasper,
 sapphire,

Chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius,
 Chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase,
 Jacynth, and amethyst—and those twelve
 gates,

Pearl—and I woke, and thought—death
 —I shall die—

I am written in the Lamb's own Book
 of Life

To walk within the glory of the Lord

Sunless and moonless, utter light—but
 no !

The Lord had sent this bright, strange
 dream to me

To mind me of the secret vow I made
 When Spain was waging war against
 the Moor—

I strove myself with Spain against the
 Moor.

There came two voices from the Sepul-
 chre,

Two friars crying that if Spain should
 oust

The Moslem from her limit, he, the fierce
 Soldan of Egypt, would break down and
 raze

The blessed tomb of Christ ; whereon I
 vow'd

That, if our Princes harken'd to my
 prayer,

Whatever wealth I brought from that new
 world

Should, in this old, be consecrate to lead
 A new crusade against the Saracen,
 And free the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Gold ? I had brought your Princes
 gold enough

If left alone ! Being but a Genovese,
 I am handled worse than had I been a
 Moor,

And breach'd the belting wall of Cambalu,
 And given the Great Khan's palaces to
 the Moor,

Or clutch'd the sacred crown of Prester
 John,

And cast it to the Moor : but *had* I
 brought

From Solomon's now-recover'd Ophir all
 The gold that Solomon's navies carried
 home,

Would that have gilded *me* ? Blue blood
 of Spain,

Tho' quartering your own royal arms of
 Spain,

I have not : blue blood and black blood
 of Spain,

The noble and the convict of Castile,
 How'd me from Hispaniola ; for you
 know

The flies at home, that ever swarm about
 And cloud the highest heads, and murmur
 down
 Truth in the distance—these outbuzz'd
 me so
 That even our prudent king, our righteous
 queen—
 I pray'd them being so calumniated
 They would commission one of weight
 and worth
 To judge between my slander'd self and
 me—
 Fonseca my main enemy at their court,
 They sent me out *his* tool, Bovadilla, one
 As ignorant and impolitic as a beast—
 Blockish irreverence, brainless greed—
 who sack'd
 My dwelling, seized upon my papers,
 loosed
 My captives, feed the rebels of the crown,
 Sold the crown-farms for all but nothing,
 gave
 All but free leave for all to work the
 mines,
 Drove me and my good brothers home in
 chains,
 And gathering ruthless gold—a single
 piece
 Weigh'd nigh four thousand Castillanos
 —so
 They tell me—weigh'd him down into the
 abysm—
 The hurricane of the latitude on him fell,
 The seas of our discovering over-roll
 Him and his gold ; the frailer caravel,
 With what was mine, came happily to the
 shore.
 There was a glimmering of God's hand.

And God

Hath more than glimmer'd on me. O
 my lord,
 I swear to you I heard his voice between
 The thunders in the black Veragua
 nights,
 'O soul of little faith, slow to believe !
 Have I not been about thee from thy
 birth ?
 Given thee the keys of the great Ocean-
 sea ?

Set thee in light till time shall be no
 more ?
 Is it I who have deceived thee or the
 world ?
 Endure ! thou hast done so well for men,
 that men
 Cry out against thee : was it otherwise
 With mine own Son ?'

And more than once in days

Of doubt and cloud and storm, when
 drowning hope
 Sank all but out of sight, I heard his
 voice,
 'Be not cast down. I lead thee by the
 hand,
 Fear not.' And I shall hear his voice
 again—
 I know that he has led me all my life,
 I am not yet too old to work his will—
 His voice again.

Still for all that, my lord,

I lying here bedridden and alone,
 Cast off, put by, scouted by court and
 king—
 The first discoverer starves—his followers,
 all
 Flower into fortune—our world's way—
 and I,
 Without a roof that I can call mine own,
 With scarce a coin to buy a meal withal,
 And seeing what a door for scoundrel
 scum
 I open'd to the West, thro' which the lust,
 Villany, violence, avarice, of your Spain
 Pour'd in on all those happy naked isles—
 Their kindly native princes slain or slaved,
 Their wives and children Spanish concu-
 bines,
 Their innocent hospitalities quench'd in
 blood,
 Some dead of hunger, some beneath the
 scourge,
 Some over-labour'd, some by their own
 hands,—
 Yea, the dear mothers, crazing Nature,
 kill
 Their babies at the breast for hate of
 Spain—

Ah God, the harmless people whom we
found
In Hispaniola's island-Paradise !
Who took us for the very Gods from
Heaven,
And we have sent them very fiends from
Hell ;
And I myself, myself not blameless, I
Could sometimes wish I had never led
the way.

Only the ghost of our great Catholic
Queen
Smiles on me, saying, 'Be thou com-
forted !
This creedless people will be brought to
Christ
And own the holy governance of Rome.'

But who could dream that we, who
bore the Cross
Thither, were excommunicated there,
For curbing crimes that scandalised the
Cross,
By him, the Catalonian Minorite,
Rome's Vicar in our Indies ? who believe
These hard memorials of our truth to
Spain
Clung closer to us for a longer term
Than any friend of ours at Court ? and yet
Pardon—too harsh, unjust. I am rack'd
with pains.

You see that I have hung them by my
bed,
And I will have them buried in my grave.

Sir, in that flight of ages which are
God's
Own voice to justify the dead—perchance
Spain once the most chivalric race on
earth,
Spain then the mightiest, wealthiest realm
on earth,
So made by me, may seek to unbury me,
To lay me in some shrine of this old Spain,
Or in that vaster Spain I leave to Spain.
Then some one standing by my grave
will say,
Behold the bones of Christopher
Colón'—

'Ay, but the chains, what do *they* mean
—the chains ?'—

I sorrow for that kindly child of Spain
Who then will have to answer, 'These
same chains
Bound these same bones back thro' the
Atlantic sea,
Which he unchain'd for all the world to
come.'

O Queen of Heaven who seest the souls
in Hell
And purgatory, I suffer all as much
As they do—for the moment. Stay, my
son
Is here anon : my son will speak for me
Ablier than I can in these spasms that
grind
Bone against bone. You will not. One
last word.

You move about the Court, I pray you
tell
King Ferdinand who plays with me, that
one,
Whose life has been no play with him
and his
Hidalgos—shipwrecks, famines, fevers,
fights,
Mutinies, treacheries—wink'd at, and
condoned—
That I am loyal to him till the death,
And ready—tho' our Holy Catholic
Queen,
Who fain had pledged her jewels on my
first voyage,
Whose hope was mine to spread the
Catholic faith,
Who wept with me when I return'd in
chains,
Who sits beside the blessed Virgin now,
To whom I send my prayer by night and
day—
She is gone—but you will tell the King,
that I,
Rack'd as I am with gout, and wrench'd
with pains
Gain'd in the service of His Highness,
yet
Am ready to sail forth on one last voyage,

And readier, if the King would hear, to
lead
One last crusade against the Saracen,
And save the Holy Sepulchre from
thrall.

Going? I am old and slighted: you
have dared
Somewhat perhaps in coming? my poor
thanks!
I am but an alien and a Genovese.

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE.

(FOUNDED ON AN IRISH LEGEND.
A.D. 700.)

I.

I WAS the chief of the race—he had
stricken my father dead—
But I gather'd my fellows together, I
swore I would strike off his head.
Each of them look'd like a king, and was
- noble in birth as in worth,
And each of them boasted he sprang from
the oldest race upon earth.
Each was as brave in the fight as the
bravest hero of song,
And each of them liefer had died than
have done one another a wrong.
He lived on an isle in the ocean—we
sail'd on a Friday morn—
He that had slain my father the day
before I was born.

II.

And we came to the isle in the ocean,
and there on the shore was he.
But a sudden blast blew us out and away
thro' a boundless sea.

III.

And we came to the Silent Isle that we
never had touch'd at before,
Where a silent ocean always broke on a
silent shore,
And the brooks glitter'd on in the light
without sound, and the long
waterfalls

Pour'd in a thunderless plunge to the base
of the mountain walls,
And the poplar and cypress unshaken by
storm flourish'd up beyond sight,
And the pine shot aloft from the crag to
an unbelievable height,
And high in the heaven above it there
flicker'd a songless lark,
And the cock couldn't crow, and the bull
couldn't low, and the dog couldn't
bark.

And round it we went, and thro' it, but
never a murmur, a breath—
It was all of it fair as life, it was all of it
quiet as death,
And we hated the beautiful Isle, for
whenever we strove to speak
Our voices were thinner and fainter than
any flittermouse-shriek;
And the men that were mighty of tongue
and could raise such a battle-cry
That a hundred who heard it would rush
on a thousand lances and die—
O they to be dumb'd by the charm!—so
fluster'd with anger were they
They almost fell on each other; but after
we sail'd away.

IV.

And we came to the Isle of Shouting, we
landed, a score of wild birds
Cried from the topmost summit with
human voices and words;
Once in an hour they cried, and whenever
their voices peal'd
The steer fell down at the plow and the
harvest died from the field,
And the men dropt dead in the valleys
and half of the cattle went lame,
And the roof sank in on the hearth, and
the dwelling broke into flame;
And the shouting of these wild birds ran
into the hearts of my crew,
Till they shouted along with the shout-
ing and seized one another and
slew;
But I drew them the one from the other;
I saw that we could not stay,
And we left the dead to the birds and we
sail'd with our wounded away.

v.

And we came to the Isle of Flowers :
 their breath met us out on the seas,
 For the Spring and the middle Summer
 sat each on the lap of the breeze ;
 And the red passion-flower to the cliffs,
 and the dark-blue clematis, clung,
 And starr'd with a myriad blossom the
 long convolvulus hung ;
 And the topmost spire of the mountain
 was lilies in lieu of snow,
 And the lilies like glaciers winded down,
 running out below
 Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the
 blaze of gorse, and the blush
 Of millions of roses that sprang without
 leaf or a thorn from the bush ;
 And the whole isle-side flashing down
 from the peak without ever a tree
 Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky
 to the blue of the sea ;
 And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and
 vaunted our kith and our kin,
 And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and
 chanted the triumph of Finn,
 Till each like a golden image was pollen'd
 from head to feet
 And each was as dry as a cricket, with
 thirst in the middle-day heat.
 Blossom and blossom, and promise of
 blossom, but never a fruit !
 And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we
 hated the isle that was mute,
 And we tore up the flowers by the million
 and flung them in bight and bay,
 And we left but a naked rock, and in
 anger we sail'd away.

vi.

And we came to the Isle of Fruits : all
 round from the cliffs and the capes,
 Purple or amber, dangled a hundred
 fathom of grapes,
 And the warm melon lay like a little sun
 on the tawny sand,
 And the fig ran up from the beach and
 rioted over the land,
 And the mountain arose like a jewell'd
 throne thro' the fragrant air,

Glowing with all-colour'd plums and with
 golden masses of pear,
 And the crimson and scarlet of berries
 that flamed upon bine and vine,
 But in every berry and fruit was the
 poisonous pleasure of wine ;
 And the peak of the mountain was apples,
 the hugest that ever were seen,
 And they prest, as they grew, on each other,
 with hardly a leaflet between,
 And all of them redder than rosiest health
 or than utterest shame,
 And setting, when Even descended, the
 very sunset aflame ;
 And we stay'd three days, and we gorged
 and we madden'd, till every one
 drew
 His sword on his fellow to slay him, and
 ever they struck and they slew ;
 And myself, I had eaten but sparsely, and
 fought till I sunder'd the fray,
 Then I bad them remember my father's
 death, and we sail'd away.

vii.

And we came to the Isle of Fire : we were
 lured by the light from afar,
 For the peak sent up one league of fire
 to the Northern Star ;
 Lured by the glare and the blare, but
 scarcely could stand upright,
 For the whole isle shudder'd and shook
 like a man in a mortal affright ;
 We were giddy besides with the fruits we
 had gorged, and so crazed that at
 last
 There were some leap'd into the fire ;
 and away we sail'd, and we past
 Over that undersea isle, where the water
 is clearer than air :
 Down we look'd : what a garden ! O
 bliss, what a Paradise there !
 Towers of a happier time, low down in
 a rainbow deep
 Silent palaces, quiet fields of eternal
 sleep !
 And three of the gentlest and best of my
 people, whate'er I could say,
 Plunged head down in the sea, and the
 Paradise trembled away.

VIII.

And we came to the Bounteous Isle, where
 the heavens lean low on the land,
 And ever at dawn from the cloud glitter'd
 o'er us a sunbright hand,
 Then it open'd and dropt at the side of
 each man, as he rose from his
 rest,
 Bread enough for his need till the labour-
 less day dipt under the West ;
 And we wander'd about it and thro' it.
 O never was time so good !
 And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and
 the boast of our ancient blood,
 And we gazed at the wandering wave as
 we sat by the gurgle of springs,
 And we chanted the songs of the Bards
 and the glories of fairy kings ;
 But at length we began to be weary, to
 sigh, and to stretch and yawn,
 Till we hated the Bounteous Isle and the
 sunbright hand of the dawn,
 For there was not an enemy near, but the
 whole green Isle was our own,
 And we took to playing at ball, and we
 took to throwing the stone,
 And we took to playing at battle, but
 that was a perilous play,
 For the passion of battle was in us, we
 slew and we sail'd away.

IX.

And we past to the Isle of Witches and
 heard their musical cry—
 'Come to us, O come, come' in the
 stormy red of a sky
 Dashing the fires and the shadows of
 dawn on the beautiful shapes,
 For a wild witch naked as heaven stood
 on each of the loftiest capes,
 And a hundred ranged on the rock like
 white sea-birds in a row,
 And a hundred gamboll'd and pranced
 on the wrecks in the sand below,
 And a hundred splash'd from the ledges,
 and bosom'd the burst of the
 spray,
 But I knew we should fall on each other,
 and hastily sail'd away.

X.

And we came in an evil time to the Isle
 of the Double Towers,
 One was of smooth-cut stone, one carved
 all over with flowers,
 But an earthquake always moved in the
 hollows under the dells,
 And they shock'd on each other and butted
 each other with clashing of bells,
 And the daws flew out of the Towers and
 jangled and wrangled in vain,
 And the clash and boom of the bells rang
 into the heart and the brain,
 Till the passion of battle was on us, and
 all took sides with the Towers,
 There were some for the clean-cut stone,
 there were more for the carven
 flowers,
 And the wrathful thunder of God peal'd
 over us all the day,
 For the one half slew the other, and after
 we sail'd away.

XI.

And we came to the Isle of a Saint who
 had sail'd with St. Brendan of
 yore,
 He had lived ever since on the Isle and
 his winters were fifteen score,
 And his voice was low as from other
 worlds, and his eyes were sweet,
 And his white hair sank to his heels and
 his white beard fell to his feet,
 And he spake to me, 'O Maeldune, let
 be this purpose of thine !
 Remember the words of the Lord when
 he told us "Vengeance is mine !"
 His fathers have slain thy fathers in war
 or in single strife,
 Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each
 taken a life for a life,
 Thy father had slain his father, how long
 shall the murder last ?
 Go back to the Isle of Finn and suffer
 the Past to be Past.'
 And we kiss'd the fringe of his beard and
 we pray'd as we heard him pray,
 And the Holy man he assoil'd us, and
 sadly we sail'd away.

XII.

And we came to the Isle we were blown
 from, and there on the shore was he,
 The man that had slain my father. I
 saw him and let him be.
 O weary was I of the travel, the trouble,
 the strife and the sin,
 When I landed again, with a tithe of my
 men, on the Isle of Finn.

DE PROFUNDIS :

THE TWO GREETINGS.

TO II. T. AUGUST 11, 1852.

I.

OUT of the deep, my child, out of the
 deep,
 Where all that was to be, in all that was,
 Whirl'd for a million æons thro' the vast
 Waste dawn of multitudinous-eddyding
 light—
 Out of the deep, my child, out of the
 deep,
 Thro' all this changing world of change-
 less law,
 And every phase of ever-heightening life,
 And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
 With this last moon, this crescent—her
 dark orb
 Touch'd with earth's light—thou comest,
 darling boy ;
 Our own ; a babe in lineament and limb
 Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man ;
 Whose face and form are hers and mine
 in one,
 Indissolubly married like our love ;
 Live, and be happy in thyself, and serve
 This mortal race thy kin so well, that men
 May bless thee as we bless thee, O young
 life
 Breaking with laughter from the dark ;
 and may
 The fated channel where thy motion lives
 Be prosperously shaped, and sway thy
 course
 Along the years of haste and random youth
 Unshatter'd ; then full-current thro' full
 man :

And last in kindly curves, with gentlest fall,
 By quiet fields, a slowly-dying power,
 To that last deep where we and thou are
 still.

II.

I.

OUT of the deep, my child, out of the
 deep,
 From that great deep, before our world
 begins,
 Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he
 will—
 Out of the deep, my child, out of the
 deep,
 From that true world within the world
 we see,
 Whereof our world is but the bounding
 shore—
 Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
 With this ninth moon, that sends the
 hidden sun
 Down yon dark sea, thou comest, darling
 boy.

II.

For in the world, which is not ours, They
 said
 'Let us make man' and that which
 should be man,
 From that one light no man can look upon,
 Drew to this shore lit by the suns and
 moons
 And all the shadows. O dear Spirit
 half-lost
 In thine own shadow and this fleshly sign
 That thou art thou—who wailest being
 born
 And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
 Of this divisible-indivisible world
 Among the numerable-innumerable
 Sun, sun, and sun, thro' finite-infinite
 space
 In finite-infinite Time—our mortal veil
 And shatter'd phantom of that infinite
 One,
 Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
 Out of His whole World-self and all in
 all—

Live thou ! and of the grain and husk,
the grape
And ivyberry, choose ; and still depart
From death to death thro' life and life,
and find
Nearer and ever nearer Him, who
wrought
Not Matter, nor the finite-infinite,
But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the
world.

THE HUMAN CRY.

I.

[HALLOWED be Thy name—Halleluiah !—
Infinite Ideality !
Immeasurable Reality !
Infinite Personality !
Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

II.

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou
and in Thee ;
We feel we are something—that also has
come from Thee ;
We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt
help us to be.
Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

PREFATORY SONNET

TO THE 'NINETEENTH CENTURY.'

THOSE that of late had fled far and fast
To touch all shores, now leaving to the
skill
Of others their old craft seaworthy still,
Have charter'd this ; where, mindful of
the past,
Our true co-mates regather round the
mast ;
Of diverse tongue, but with a common
will
Here, in this roaring moon of daffodil
And crocus, to put forth and brave the
blast ;
For some, descending from the sacred
peak

Of hoar high-templed Faith, have leagued
again
Their lot with ours to rove the world
about ;
And some are wilder comrades, sworn to
seek
If any golden harbour be for men
In seas of Death and sunless gulfs of
Doubt.

TO THE REV. W. H. BROOK-
FIELD.

BROOKS, for they call'd you so that knew
you best,
Old Brooks, who loved so well to mouth
my rhymes,
How oft we two have heard St. Mary's
chimes !
How oft the Cantab supper, host and
guest,
Would echo helpless laughter to your
jest !
How oft with him we paced that walk of
limes,
Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden
times,
Who loved you well ! Now both are gone
to rest.
You man of humorous-melancholy mark,
Dead of some inward agony—is it so ?
Our kindlier, trustier Jaques, past away !
I cannot laud this life, it looks so dark :
Σκιὰς ὄνυξ—dream of a shadow, go—
God bless you. I shall join you in a
day.

MONTENEGRO.

THEY rose to where their sovran eagle
sails,
They kept their faith, their freedom, on
the height,
Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and
night
Against the Turk ; whose inroad nowhere
scales
Their headlong passes, but his footstep
fails,

And red with blood the Crescent reels
 from fight
 Before their dauntless hundreds, in prone
 flight
 By thousands down the crags and thro'
 the vales.
 O smallest among peoples ! rough rock-
 throne
 Of Freedom ! warriors beating back the
 swarm
 Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
 Great Tsernogora ! never since thine own
 Black ridges drew the cloud and brake
 the storm
 Has breathed a race of mightier moun-
 taineers.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

VICTOR in Drama, Victor in Romance,
 Cloud-weaver of phantasmal hopes and
 fears,

French of the French, and Lord of human
 tears ;
 Child-lover ; Bard whose fame-lit laurels
 glance
 Darkening the wreaths of all that would
 advance,
 Beyond our strait, their claim to be thy
 peers ;
 Weird Titan by thy winter weight of
 years
 As yet unbroken, Stormy voice of
 France !
 Who dost not love our England—so they
 say ;
 I know not—England, France, all man
 to be
 Will make one people ere man's race be
 run :
 And I, desiring that diviner day,
 Yield thee full thanks for thy full
 courtesy
 To younger England in the boy my son.

TRANSLATIONS, ETC.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH.

Constantinus, King of the Scots, after having
 sworn allegiance to Athelstan, allied himself with
 the Danes of Ireland under Anlaf, and invading
 England, was defeated by Athelstan and his
 brother Edmund with great slaughter at Brunan-
 burh in the year 937.

I.

¹ ATHELSTAN King,
 Lord among Earls,
 Bracelet-bestower and
 Baron of Barons,
 He with his brother,
 Edmund Atheling,
 Gaining a lifelong
 Glory in battle,
 Slew with the sword-edge
 There by Brunanburh,

¹ I have more or less availed myself of my
 son's prose translation of this poem in the *Con-
 temporary Review* (November 1876).

Brake the shield-wall,
 Hew'd the lindenwood,²
 Hack'd the battleshield,
 Sons of Edward with hammer'd brands.

II.

Theirs was a greatness
 Got from their Grandsires—
 Theirs that so often in
 Strife with their enemies
 Struck for their hoards and their hearths
 and their homes.

III.

Bow'd the spoiler,
 Bent the Scotsman,
 Fell the shipcrews
 Doom'd to the death.
 All the field with blood of the fighters
 Flow'd, from when first the great
 Sun-star of morningtide,

² Shields of lindenwood.

Lamp of the Lord God

Lord everlasting,

Glode over earth till the glorious creature
Sank to his setting.

IV.

There lay many a man

Marr'd by the javelin,

Men of the Northland

Shot over shield.

There was the Scotsman

Weary of war.

V.

We the West-Saxons,

Long as the daylight

Lasted, in companies

Troubled the track of the host that we
hated,

Grimly with swords that were sharp from
the grindstone,

Fiercely we hack'd at the flyers before
us.

VI.

Mighty the Mercian,

Hard was his hand-play,

Sparing not any of

Those that with Anlaf,

Warriors over the

Weltering waters

Borne in the bark's-bosom,

Drew to this island:

Doom'd to the death.

VII.

Five young kings put asleep by the sword-
stroke,

Seven strong Earls of the army of Anlaf

Fell on the war-field, numberless numbers,

Shipmen and Scotsmen.

VIII.

Then the Norse leader,

Dire was his need of it,

Few were his following,

Fled to his warship:

Fleeted his vessel to sea with the king
in it,

Saving his life on the fallow flood.

IX.

Also the crafty one,

Constantinus,

Crept to his North again,

Hoar-headed hero!

X.

Slender warrant had

He to be proud of

The welcome of war-knives—

He that was reft of his

Folk and his friends that had

Fallen in conflict,

Leaving his son too

Lost in the carnage,

Mangled to morsels,

A youngster in war!

XI.

Slender reason had

He to be glad of

The clash of the war-glaive—

Traitor and trickster

And spurner of treaties—

He nor had Anlaf

With armies so broken

A reason for bragging

That they had the better

In perils of battle

On places of slaughter—

The struggle of standards,

The rush of the javelins,

The crash of the charges,¹

The wielding of weapons—

The play that they play'd with

The children of Edward.

XII.

Then with their nail'd prows

Parted the Norsemen, a

Blood-redden'd relic of

Javelins over

The jarring breaker, the deep-

sea billow,

Shaping their way toward Dy-

flen² again,

Shamed in their souls.

¹ Lit. 'the gathering of men.' ² Dublin

XIII.

Also the brethren,
King and Atheling,
Each in his glory,
Went to his own in his own West-Saxon-
land,
Glad of the war.

XIV.

Many a carcase they left to be carrion,
Many a livid one, many a sallow-skin—
Left for the white-tail'd eagle to tear it,
and
Left for the horny-nibb'd raven to rend
it, and
Gave to the garbaging war-hawk to gorge
it, and
That gray beast, the wolf of the weald.

XV.

Never had huger
Slaughter of heroes
Slain by the sword-edge—
Such as old writers
Have writ of in histories—
Hapt in this isle, since
Up from the East hither
Saxon and Angle from
Over the broad billow
Broke into Britain with
Haughty war-workers who
Harried the Welshman, when
Earls that were lured by the
Hunger of glory gat
Hold of the land.

ACHILLES OVER THE
TRENCH.

ILIAD, xviii. 202.

So saying, light-foot Iris pass'd away.
Then rose Achilles dear to Zeus; and
round
The warrior's puissant shoulders Pallas
flung
Her fringed ægis, and around his head
The glorious goddess wreath'd a golden
cloud,

And from it lighted an all-shining
flame.
As when a smoke from a city goes to
heaven
Far off from out an island girt by foes,
All day the men contend in grievous
war
From their own city, but with set of
sun
Their fires flame thickly, and aloft the
glare
Flies streaming, if perchance the neigh-
bours round
May see, and sail to help them in the
war;
So from his head the splendour went to
heaven.
From wall to dyke he stept, he stood,
nor join'd
The Achæans—honouring his wise
mother's word—
There standing, shouted, and Pallas far
away
Call'd; and a boundless panic shook the
foe.
For like the clear voice when a trumpet
shrills,
Blown by the fierce beleaguers of a
town,
So rang the clear voice of Æakidês;
And when the brazen cry of Æakidês
Was heard among the Trojans, all their
hearts
Were troubled, and the full-maned horses
whirl'd
The chariots backward, knowing griefs
at hand;
And sheer-astounded were the charioteers
To see the dread, unweariable fire
That always o'er the great Peleion's
head
Burn'd, for the bright-eyed goddess made
it burn.
Thrice from the dyke he sent his mighty
shout,
Thrice backward reel'd the Trojans and
allies;
And there and then twelve of their noblest
died
Among their spears and chariots.

TO PRINCESS FREDERICA
ON HER MARRIAGE.

O YOU that were eyes and light to the
King till he past away
From the darkness of life—
He saw not his daughter—he blest her :
the blind King sees you to-day,
He blesses the wife.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

ON THE CENOTAPH IN WESTMINSTER
ABBEY.

NOT here ! the white North has thy
Bones ; and thou,
Heroic sailor-soul,
Art passing on thine happier voyage now
Toward no earthly pole.

TO DANTE.

(WRITTEN AT REQUEST OF THE
FLORENTINES.)

KING, that hast reign'd six hundred years,
and grown
In power, and ever growest, since thine
own
Fair Florence honouring thy nativity,
Thy Florence now the crown of Italy,
Hath sought the tribute of a verse from
me,
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet one flower that fades
away.

TIRESIAS

AND OTHER POEMS.

TO MY GOOD FRIEND

ROBERT BROWNING,

WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST,
AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

TO E. FITZGERALD.

OLD FITZ, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile ;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And while your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers ;
Who live on milk and meal and grass ;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,

And seem'd at first 'a thing enskied'
(As Shakespeare has it) airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again
One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost ;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,
And set me climbing icy capes
And glaciers, over which there roll'd
To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
Of Eshcol hugeness ; for the cold
Without, and warmth within me, wrought
To mould the dream ; but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,

Than which I know no version done
 In English more divinely well ;
 A planet equal to the sun
 Which cast it, that large infidel
 Your Omar ; and your Omar drew
 Full-handed plaudits from our best
 In modern letters, and from two,
 Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
 Two voices heard on earth no more ;
 But we old friends are still alive,
 And I am nearing seventy-four,
 While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
 And so I send a birthday line
 Of greeting ; and my son, who dipt
 In some forgotten book of mine
 With sallow scraps of manuscript,
 And dating many a year ago,
 Has hit on this, which you will take
 My Fitz, and welcome, as I know
 Less for its own than for the sake
 Of one recalling gracious times,
 When, in our younger London days,
 You found some merit in my rhymes,
 And I more pleasure in your praise.

TIRESIAS.

I WISH I were as in the years of old,
 While yet the blessed daylight made itself
 Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and
 woke
 These eyes, now dull, but then so keen
 to seek
 The meanings ambush'd under all they
 saw,
 The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
 What omens may foreshadow fate to man
 And woman, and the secret of the Gods.
 My son, the Gods, despite of human
 prayer,
 Are slower to forgive than human kings.
 The great God, Arês, burns in anger still
 Against the guiltless heirs of him from
 Tyre,
 Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art,
 who found
 Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and
 still'd
 Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
 The dragon, which our trembling fathers
 call'd

The God's own son.

A tale, that told to me,
 When but thine age, by age as winter-
 white
 As mine is now, amazed, but made me
 yearn
 For larger glimpses of that more than man
 Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and
 lays the deep,
 Yet loves and hates with mortal hates
 and loves,
 And moves unseen among the ways of
 men.

Then, in my wanderings all the lands
 that lie
 Subjected to the Helicônian ridge
 Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my
 wont
 Was more to scale the highest of the
 heights
 With some strange hope to see the nearer
 God.

One naked peak—the sister of the sun
 Would climb from out the dark, and
 linger there

To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
 There once, but long ago, five-fold thy
 term

Of years, I lay ; the winds were dead
 for heat ;
 The noonday crag made the hand burn ;
 and sick
 For shadow—not one bush was near—
 I rose

Following a torrent till its myriad falls
 Found silence in the hollows underneath.

There in a secret olive-glade I saw
 Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
 In anger ; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
 The lucid well ; one snowy knee was prest
 Against the margin flowers ; a dreadful
 light

Came from her golden hair, her golden
 helm

And all her golden armour on the grass,
 And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
 Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew
 dark

For ever, and I heard a voice that said
 ' Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen
 too much,

And speak the truth that no man may
believe.
Son, in the hidden world of sight, that
lives
Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the
stone,
Beyond all dreams of Godlike woman-
hood,
Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a
glance,
And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with
the curse
Of blindness and their unbelief, who
heard
And heard not, when I spake of famine,
plague,
Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood,
thunderbolt,
And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own! for when the
crowd would roar
For blood, for war, whose issue was their
doom,
To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions; nor, in
hours
Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on
both the yoke
Of stronger states, was mine the voice to
curb
The madness of our cities and their
kings.
Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one
Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?
This power hath work'd no good to
aught that lives,
And these blind hands were useless in
their wars.
O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's
heart—

Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue,
rear'd
To some great citizen, win all praise
from all
Who past it, saying, 'That was he!'
In vain!
Virtue must shape itself in deed, and
those
Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immersing, each, his
urn
In his own well, draw solace as he may.
Menœceus, thou hast eyes, and I can
hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight
of war
Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of
bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted
horse
That grind the glebe to powder! Stony
showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above,
below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers
and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the
shuddering
War-thunder of iron rams; and from
within
The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens,
wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the
dawn,
And oldest age in shadow from the
night,
Falling about their shrines before their
Gods,
And wailing 'Save us.'
And they wail to thee!
These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine
own,
See this, that only in thy virtue lies
The saving of our Thebes; for, yester-
night,
To me, the great God Arês, whose one
bliss

Is war, and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet
tip

With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying
'Thebes,

Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I
loathe

The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these——'

My son,

No sound is breathed so potent to
coerce,

And to conciliate, as their names who
dare

For that sweet mother land which gave
them birth

Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
Graven on memorial columns, are a
song

Heard in the future; few, but more than
wall

And rampart, their examples reach a
hand

Far thro' all years, and everywhere they
meet

And kindle generous purpose, and the
strength

To mould it into action pure as theirs.

Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best
end

Be to end well! and thou refusing this,
Unvenerable will thy memory be

While men shall move the lips: but if
thou dare—

Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus
—then

No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious
doom,

Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy
name

To every hoof that clangs it, and the
springs

Of Dirce laving yonder battle-plain,
Heard from the roofs by night, will mur-
mur thee

To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro'
thee shall stand

Firm-based with all her Gods.

The Dragon's cave

Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing
vines—

Where once he dwelt and whence he
roll'd himself

At dead of night—thou knowest, and
that smooth rock

Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings
drawn back,

Folded her lion paws, and look'd to
Thebes.

There blanch the bones of whom she
slew, and these

Mixt with her own, because the fierce
beast found

A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
Dead in her rage: but thou art wise
enough,

Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the
curse

Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the
truth

Believe I speak it, let thine own hand
strike

Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—
thou

Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the
stars

Send no such light upon the ways of men
As one great deed.

Thither, my son, and there
Thou, that hast never known the embrace
of love,

Offer thy maiden life.

This useless hand!

I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone!
He will achieve his greatness.

But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of
old,

On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods—the wise man's
word,

Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crown'd with worship—and these
eyes will find

The men I knew, and watch the chariot
whirl
About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-
kings,
In height and prowess more than human,
strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense-
fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

‘One height and one far-shining fire’
And while I fancied that my friend
For this brief idyll would require
A less diffuse and opulent end,
And would defend his judgment well,
If I should deem it over nice—
The tolling of his funeral bell
Broke on my Pagan Paradise,
And mixt the dream of classic times
And all the phantoms of the dream,
With present grief, and made the rhymes,
That miss’d his living welcome, seem
Like would-be guests an hour too late,
Who down the highway moving on
With easy laughter find the gate
Is bolted, and the master gone.
Gone into darkness, that full light
Of friendship ! past, in sleep, away
By night, into the deeper night !
The deeper night ? A clearer day
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
If night, what barren toil to be !
What life, so maim’d by night, were
worth
Our living out ? Not mine to me
Remembering all the golden hours
Now silent, and so many dead,
And him the last ; and laying flowers,
This wreath, above his honour’d head,
And praying that, when I from hence
Shall fade with him into the unknown,
My close of earth’s experience
May prove as peaceful as his own.

THE WRECK.

I.

HIDE me, Mother ! my Fathers belong’d
to the church of old,
I am driven by storm and sin and death
to the ancient fold,
I cling to the Catholic Cross once more,
to the Faith that saves,
My brain is full of the crash of wrecks,
and the roar of waves,
My life itself is a wreck, I have sullied a
noble name,
I am flung from the rushing tide of the
world as a waif of shame,
I am roused by the wail of a child, and
awake to a livid light,
And a ghastlier face than ever has haunted
a grave by night,
I would hide from the storm without, I
would flee from the storm within,
I would make my life one prayer for a
soul that died in his sin,
I was the tempter, Mother, and mine was
the deeper fall ;
I will sit at your feet, I will hide my face,
I will tell you all.

II.

He that they gave me to, Mother, a
heedless and innocent bride—
I never have wrong’d his heart, I have
only wounded his pride—
Spain in his blood and the Jew—dark-
visaged, stately and tall—
A princelier-looking man never stept thro’
a Prince’s hall.
And who, when his anger was kindled,
would venture to give him the nay ?
And a man men fear is a man to be loved
by the women they say.
And I could have loved him too, if the
blossom can doat on the blight,
Or the young green leaf rejoice in the frost
that sears it at night ;
He would open the books that I prized,
and toss them away with a yawn,

Repell'd by the magnet of Art to the which
 my nature was drawn,
 The word of the Poet by whom the deeps
 of the world are stirr'd,
 The music that robes it in language beneath
 and beyond the word !
 My Shelley would fall from my hands when
 he cast a contemptuous glance
 From where he was poring over his
 Tables of Trade and Finance ;
 My hands, when I heard him coming
 would drop from the chords or the
 keys,
 But ever I fail'd to please him, however
 I strove to please—
 All day long far-off in the cloud of the
 city, and there
 Lost, head and heart, in the chances of
 dividend, consol, and share—
 And at home if I sought for a kindly
 caress, being woman and weak,
 His formal kiss fell chill as a flake of snow
 on the cheek :
 And so, when I bore him a girl, when I
 held it aloft in my joy,
 He look'd at it coldly, and said to me
 'Pity it isn't a boy.'
 The one thing given me, to love and to
 live for, glanced at in scorn !
 The child that I felt I could die for—as
 if she were basely born !
 I had lived a wild-flower life, I was planted
 now in a tomb ;
 The daisy will shut to the shadow, I closed
 my heart to the gloom ;
 I threw myself all abroad—I would play
 my part with the young
 By the low foot-lights of the world—and
 I caught the wreath that was flung.

III.

Mother, I have not—however their
 tongues may have babbled of me—
 Sinn'd thro' an animal vileness, for all
 but a dwarf was he,
 And all but a hunchback too ; and I
 look'd at him, first, askance,
 With pity—not he the knight for an
 amorous girl's romance !

Tho' wealthy enough to have bask'd in
 the light of a dowerless smile,
 Having lands at home and abroad in a
 rich West-Indian isle ;
 But I came on him once at a ball, the
 heart of a listening crowd—
 Why, what a brow was there ! he was
 seated—speaking aloud
 To women, the flower of the time, and
 men at the helm of state—
 Flowing with easy greatness and touch-
 ing on all things great,
 Science, philosophy, song—till I felt my
 self ready to weep
 For I knew not what, when I heard that
 voice,—as mellow and deep
 As a psalm by a mighty master and peal'd
 from an organ,—roll
 Rising and falling—for, Mother, the voice
 was the voice of the soul ;
 And the sun of the soul made day in the
 dark of his wonderful eyes.
 Here was the hand that would help me,
 would heal me—the heart that
 was wise !
 And he, poor man, when he learnt that
 I hated the ring I wore,
 He helpt me with death, and he heal'd
 me with sorrow for evermore.

IV.

For I broke the bond. That day my
 nurse had brought me the child.
 The small sweet face was flush'd, but it
 coo'd to the Mother and smiled.
 'Anything ailing,' I ask'd her, 'with
 baby?' She shook her head,
 And the Motherless Mother kiss'd it, and
 turn'd in her haste and fled.

V.

Low warm winds had gently breathed us
 away from the land—
 Ten long sweet summer days upon deck,
 sitting hand in hand—
 When he clothed a naked mind with the
 wisdom and wealth of his own,
 And I bow'd myself down as a slave to
 his intellectual throne,

When he coin'd into English gold some
treasure of classical song,
When he flouted a statesman's error, or
flamed at a public wrong,
When he rose as it were on the wings of
an eagle beyond me, and past
Over the range and the change of the
world from the first to the last,
When he spoke of his tropical home in
the canes by the purple tide,
And the high star-crowns of his palms on
the deep-wooded mountain-side,
And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt
to the brink of his bay,
And trees like the towers of a minster,
the sons of a winterless day.
'Paradise there!' so he said, but I seem'd
in Paradise then
With the first great love I had felt for the
first and greatest of men;
Ten long days of summer and sin—if it
must be so—
But days of a larger light than I ever
again shall know—
Days that will glimmer, I fear, thro' life
to my latest breath;
'No frost there,' so he said, 'as in truest
Love no Death.'

VI.

Mother, one morning a bird with a warble
plaintively sweet
Perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell
fluttering down at my feet;
I took it, he made it a cage, we fondled
it, Stephen and I,
But it died, and I thought of the child
for a moment, I scarce know why.

VII.

But if sin be sin, not inherited fate, as
many will say,
My sin to my desolate little one found
me at sea on a day,
When her orphan wail came borne in the
shriek of a growing wind,
And a voice rang out in the thunders of
Ocean and Heaven 'Thou hast
sinn'd.'

And down in the cabin were we, for the
towering crest of the tides
Plunged on the vessel and swept in a
cataract off from her sides,
And ever the great storm grew with a
howl and a hoot of the blast
In the rigging, voices of hell—then came
the crash of the mast.
'The wages of sin is death,' and there I
began to weep,
'I am the Jonah, the crew should cast
me into the deep,
For ah God, what a heart was mine to
forsake her even for you.'
'Never the heart among women,' he said,
'more tender and true.'
'The heart! not a mother's heart, when
I left my darling alone.'
'Comfort yourself, for the heart of the
father will care for his own.'
'The heart of the father will spurn her,'
I cried, 'for the sin of the wife,
The cloud of the mother's shame will
enfold her and darken her life.'
Then his pale face twitch'd; 'O Stephen,
I love you, I love you, and yet'—
As I lean'd away from his arms—'would
God, we had never met!'
And he spoke not—only the storm; till
after a little, I yearn'd
For his voice again, and he call'd to me
'Kiss me!' and there—as I
turn'd—
'The heart, the heart!' I kiss'd him, I
clung to the sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us,
and he—was out of the storm.

VIII.

And then, then, Mother, the ship stag-
ger'd under a thunderous shock,
That shook us asunder, as if she had
struck and crash'd on a rock;
For a huge sea smote every soul from the
decks of The Falcon but one;
All of them, all but the man that was
lash'd to the helm had gone;
And I fell—and the storm and the days
went by, but I knew no more—

Lost myself—lay like the dead by the
 dead on the cabin floor,
 Dead to the death beside me, and lost to
 the loss that was mine,
 With a dim dream, now and then, of a
 hand giving bread and wine,
 Till I woke from the trance, and the ship
 stood still, and the skies were
 blue,
 But the face I had known, O Mother,
 was not the face that I knew.

IX.

The strange misfeaturing mask that I saw
 so amazed me, that I
 Stumbled on deck, half mad. I would
 fling myself over and die!
 But one—he was waving a flag—the one
 man left on the wreck—
 ‘Woman’—he graspt at my arm—‘stay
 there’—I crouch’d upon deck—
 ‘We are sinking, and yet there’s hope:
 look yonder,’ he cried, ‘a sail’
 In a tone so rough that I broke into
 passionate tears, and the wail
 Of a beaten babe, till I saw that a boat
 was nearing us—then
 All on a sudden I thought, I shall look
 on the child again.

X.

They lower’d me down the side, and
 there in the boat I lay
 With sad eyes fixt on the lost sea-home,
 as we glided away,
 And I sigh’d, as the low dark hull dipt
 under the smiling main,
 ‘Had I stay’d with *him*, I had now—
 with *him*—been out of my pain.’

XI.

They took us aboard: the crew were
 gentle, the captain kind;
 But I was the lonely slave of an often-
 wandering mind;
 For whenever a rougher gust might
 tumble a stormier wave,
 ‘O Stephen,’ I moan’d, ‘I am coming
 to thee in thine Ocean-grave.’

And again, when a balmier breeze curl’d
 over a peacefuller sea,
 I found myself moaning again ‘O child,
 I am coming to thee.’

XII.

The broad white brow of the Isle—that
 bay with the colour’d sand—
 Rich was the rose of sunset there, as we
 drew to the land;
 All so quiet the ripple would hardly
 blanch into spray
 At the feet of the cliff; and I pray’d—
 ‘my child’—for I still could
 pray—
 ‘May her life be as blissfully calm, be
 never gloom’d by the curse
 Of a sin, not hers!’

Was it well with the child?

I wrote to the nurse
 Who had borne my flower on her hireling
 heart; and an answer came
 Not from the nurse—nor yet to the wife
 —to her maiden name!
 I shook as I open’d the letter—I knew
 that hand too well—
 And from it a scrap, clipt out of the
 ‘deaths’ in a paper, fell.
 ‘Ten long sweet summer days’ of fever,
 and want of care!
 And gone—that day of the storm—O
 Mother, she came to me there.

DESPAIR.

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God,
 and hope of a life to come, and being utterly
 miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by
 drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man
 rescued by a minister of the sect he had aban-
 doned.

I.

Is it you, that preach’d in the chapel
 there looking over the sand?
 Follow’d us too that night, and dogg’d
 us, and drew me to land?

II

What did I feel that night? You are
 curious. How should I tell?

Does it matter so much what I felt?
 You rescued me—yet—was it
 well
 That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd,
 between me and the deep and my
 doom,
 Three days since, three more dark days
 of the Godless gloom
 Of a life without sun, without health, with-
 out hope, without any delight
 In anything here upon earth? but ah
 God, that night, that night
 When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse
 there on the fatal neck
 Of land running out into rock—they had
 saved many hundreds from wreck—
 Glared on our way toward death, I re-
 member I thought, as we past,
 Does it matter how many they saved?
 we are all of us wreck'd at last—
 'Do you fear?' and there came thro' the
 roar of the breaker a whisper, a
 breath,
 'Fear? am I not with you? I am
 frightened at life not death.'

III.

And the suns of the limitless Universe
 sparkled and shone in the sky,
 Flashing with fires as of God, but we
 knew that their light was a lie—
 Bright as with deathless hope—but,
 however they sparkled and shone,
 The dark little worlds running round
 them were worlds of woe like our
 own—
 No soul in the heaven above, no soul on
 the earth below,
 A fiery scroll written over with lamenta-
 tion and woe.

IV.

See, we were nursed in the drear night-
 fold of your fatalist creed,
 And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we
 had hoped for a dawn indeed,
 When the light of a Sun that was coming
 would scatter the ghosts of the
 Past,

And the cramping creeds that had
 madden'd the peoples would
 vanish at last,
 And we broke away from the Christ, our
 human brother and friend,
 For He spoke, or it seem'd that He
 spoke, of a Hell without help,
 without end.

V.

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the
 promise had faded away;
 We had past from a cheerless night to
 the glare of a drearier day;
 He is only a cloud and a smoke who was
 once a pillar of fire,
 The guess of a worm in the dust and the
 shadow of its desire—
 Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the
 weak trodden down by the strong,
 Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre,
 murder, and wrong.

VI.

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on
 that lonely shore—
 Born of the brainless Nature who knew
 not that which she bore!
 Trusting no longer that earthly flower
 would be heavenly fruit—
 Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls
 —and to die with the brute—

VII.

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity: I
 know you of old—
 Small pity for those that have ranged from
 the narrow warmth of your fold,
 Where you bawl'd the dark side of your
 faith and a God of eternal rage,
 Till you flung us back on ourselves, and
 the human heart, and the Age.

VIII.

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was
 in her and in me,
 Helpless, taking the place of the pitying
 God that should be!

Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an
idiot power,
And pity for our own selves on an earth
that bore not a flower;
Pity for all that suffers on land or in air
or the deep,
And pity for our own selves till we long'd
for eternal sleep.

IX.

'Lightly step over the sands! the waters
—you hear them call!
Life with its anguish, and horrors, and
errors—away with it all!
'And she laid her hand in my own—she
was always loyal and sweet—
Till the points of the foam in the dusk
came playing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would
sweep us out to the main.
'Ah God' tho' I felt as I spoke I was
taking the name in vain—
'Ah God' and we turn'd to each other,
we kiss'd, we embraced, she and I,
Knowing the Love we were used to be-
lieve everlasting would die:
We had read their know-nothing books
and we lean'd to the darker side—
Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps,
perhaps, if we died, if we died;
We never had found Him on earth, this
earth is a fatherless Hell—
'Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever
and ever farewell,'
Never a cry so desolate, not since the
world began,
Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the
coming of man!

X.

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and
you saved me, a valueless life.
Not a grain of gratitude mine! You
have parted the man from the wife.
I am left alone on the land, she is all
alone in the sea;
If a curse meant ought, I would curse
you for not having let me be.

XI.

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk
with the water, it seems;
I had past into perfect quiet at length
out of pleasant dreams,
And the transient trouble of drowning—
what was it when match'd with
the pains
Of the hellish heat of a wretched life
rushing back thro' the veins?

XII.

Why should I live? one son had forged
on his father and fled,
And if I believed in a God, I would
thank him, the other is dead,
And there was a baby-girl, that had
never look'd on the light:
Happiest she of us all, for she past from
the night to the night.

XIII.

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-
born, her glory, her boast,
Struck hard at the tender heart of the
mother, and broke it almost;
Tho', glory and shame dying out for ever
in endless time,
Does it matter so much whether crown'd
for a virtue, or hang'd for a crime?

XIV.

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood
there, naked, amazed
In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd
myself turning crazed,
And I would not be mock'd in a mad-
house! and she, the delicate wife,
With a grief that could only be cured, if
cured, by the surgeon's knife,—

XV.

Why should we bear with an hour of
torture, a moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs
are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be
wheel'd thro' the silence of space,

Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing
 race,
 When the worm shall have writhed its
 last, and its last brother-worm
 will have fled
 From the dead fossil skull that is left in
 the rocks of an earth that is dead?

XVI.

Have I crazed myself over their horrible
 infidel writings? O yes,
 For these are the new dark ages, you see,
 of the popular press,
 When the bat comes out of his cave, and
 the owls are whooping at noon,
 And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill
 and crows to the sun and the
 moon,
 Till the Sun and the Moon of our science
 are both of them turn'd into blood,
 And Hope will have broken her heart,
 running after a shadow of good;
 For their knowing and know-nothing
 books are scatter'd from hand to
 hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel
 too looking over the sand.

XVII.

What! I should call on that Infinite
 Love that has served us so well?
 Infinite cruelty rather that made ever-
 lasting Hell,
 Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and
 does what he will with his own;
 Better our dead brute mother who never
 has heard us groan!

XVIII.

Hell? if the souls of men were immortal,
 as men have been told,
 The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and
 the miser would yearn for his gold,
 And so there were Hell for ever! but
 were there a God as you say,
 His Love would have power over Hell
 till it utterly vanish'd away.

XIX.

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at
 times, in my gloomiest woe,
 Of a God behind all—after all—the great
 God for aught that I know;
 But the God of Love and of Hell to-
 gether—they cannot be thought,
 If there be such a God, may the Great
 God curse him and bring him to
 nought!

XX.

Blasphemy! whose is the fault? is it
 mine? for why would you save
 A madman to vex you with wretched
 words, who is best in his grave?
 Blasphemy! ay, why not, being damn'd
 beyond hope of grace?
 O would I were yonder with her, and
 away from your faith and your
 face!
 Blasphemy! true! I have scared you
 pale with my scandalous talk,
 But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in
 the way that you walk.

XXI.

Hence! she is gone! can I stay? can I
 breathe divorced from the Past?
 You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I
 do not escape you at last.
 Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find
 it a *felo-de-se*,
 And the stake and the cross-road, fool,
 if you will, does it matter to me?

THE ANCIENT SAGE.

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of
 Christ
 From out his ancient city came a Seer
 Whom one that loved, and honour'd
 him, and yet
 Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
 From wasteful living, follow'd—in his
 hand
 A scroll of verse—till that old man before

A cavern whence an affluent fountain
pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and
spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to
draw

From yon dark cave, but, son, the source
is higher,

Yon summit half-a-league in air—and
higher,

The cloud that hides it—higher still, the
heavens

Whereby the cloud was moulded, and
whereout

The cloud descended. Force is from the
heights.

I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the
hills.

What hast thou there? Some deathsong
for the Ghouls

To make their banquet relish? let me
read.

“How far thro’ all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!

What power but the bird’s could make
This music in the bird?

How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!

And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?

But man to-day is fancy’s fool
As man hath ever been.

The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen.”

If thou would’st hear the Nameless, and
wilt dive

Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May’st haply learn the Nameless hath a
voice,

By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho’ thou canst not
know;

For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow
there

But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath,
within

The blue of sky and sea, the green of
earth,

And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.

And when thou sendest thy free soul
thro’ heaven,

Nor understandest bound nor boundless
ness,

Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred
names.

And if the Nameless should withdraw
from all

Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

“And since—from when this earth
began—

The Nameless never came
Among us, never spake with man,
And never named the Name”—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O
my son,

Nor canst thou prove the world thou
movest in,

Thou canst not prove that thou art body
alone,

Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit
alone,

Nor canst thou prove that thou art both
in one:

Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my
son,

Thou canst not prove that I, who speak
with thee,

Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be
proven,

Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be
wise,

Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of
Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring
words,
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and
'No,'
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the
Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter
bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom
falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd
'Mirage'!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?"

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this
house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of
man,
A beauty with defect——till That which
knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we
feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the
last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

'What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?
What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing
by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and
shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or
Pain;

But with the Nameless is nor Day nor
Hour;
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from
thought to thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the
Eternal Now:

This double seeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a
dream

Of nightmare, when the babblings break
the dream.

But thou be wise in this dream-world of
'ours,

Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy
will.

"The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold;
His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow
life

Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the
past
Is feeblér than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;

The warrior hath forgot his arms,
 The Learned all his lore ;
 The changing market frets or charms
 The merchant's hope no more ;
 The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
 And now is lost in cloud ;
 The plowman passes, bent with pain,
 To mix with what he plow'd ;
 The poet whom his Age would quote
 As heir of endless fame—
 He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
 Not even his own name.
 For man has overlived his day,
 And, darkening in the light,
 Scarce feels the senses break away
 To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
 Had set the lily and rose
 By all my ways where'er they ran,
 Have ended mortal foes ;
 My rose of love for ever gone,
 My lily of truth and trust—
 They made her lily and rose in one,
 And changed her into dust.
 O rosetree planted in my grief,
 And growing, on her tomb,
 Her dust is green in your leaf,
 Her blood is in your bloom.
 O slender lily waving there,
 And laughing back the light,
 In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
 When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and
 graves,
 So dark that men cry out against the
 Heavens.
 Who knows but that the darkness is in
 man ?
 The doors of Night may be the gates of
 Light ;
 For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and
 then
 Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory
 in all
 The splendours and the voices of the
 world !

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
 No phantoms, watching from a phantom
 shore

Await the last and largest sense to make
 The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
 And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
 As laughter over wine,
 And vain the laughter as the tears,
 O brother, mine or thine,

For all that laugh, and all that weep
 And all that breathe are one
 Slight ripple on the boundless deep
 That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
 Feels that the deep is boundless, and
 itself

For ever changing form, but evermore
 One with the boundless motion of the
 deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends ! and see
 The lamps alight, and call
 For golden music, and forget
 The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my
 son—

But earth's dark forehead flings athwart
 the heavens

Her shadow crown'd with stars—and
 yonder—out

To northward—some that never set, but
 pass

From sight and night to lose themselves
 in day.

I hate the black negation of the bier,
 And wish the dead, as happier than our
 selves

And higher, having climb'd one step
 beyond

Our village miseries, might be borne in
 white

To burial or to burning, hymn'd from
 hence

With songs in praise of death, and
 crown'd with flowers !

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings !"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then
I call'd,

Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the
Past.'

The first gray streak of earliest summer-
dawn,

The last long stripe of waning crimson
gloom,

As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a
flower

Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost
and gone !'

A breath, a whisper—some divine fare-
well—

Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost,
the boy?

I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! for more than
once when I

Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs,
the limbs

Were strange not mine—and yet no shade
of doubt,

But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd
with ours

Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in
words,

Themselves but shadows of a shadow-
world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain ;"

The clouds themselves are children of the
Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the
Sun,

And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the
Night,

And some, the Night was father of the
Light,

No night no day !—I touch thy world
again—

No ill no good ! such counter-terms, my
son,

Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war : but night enough is there
In yon dark city : get thee back : and
since

The key to that weird casket, which for
thee

But holds a skull, is neither thine nor
mine,

But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than
man,

Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy
king,

And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart ;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall ;
Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous
looms ;

Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied
wine ;

Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting ;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wan-
tonness ;

And more—think well ! Do-well will
follow thought,

And in the fatal sequence of this world

An evil thought may soil thy children's
blood ;

But curb the beast would cast thee in the
mire,

And leave the hot swamp of voluptuous-
ness

A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the
wheel,

And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence,
if thou

Look higher, then—perchance—thou
mayest—beyond

A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow
—see

The high-heaven dawn of more than
mortal day

Strike on the Mount of Vision !
So, farewell.

THE FLIGHT.

I.

ARE you sleeping ? have you forgotten ?
do not sleep, my sister dear !

How *can* you sleep ? the morning brings
the day I hate and fear ;

The cock has crow'd already once, he
crows before his time ;

Awake ! the creeping glimmer steals, the
hills are white with rime.

II.

Ah, clasp me in your arms, sister, ah,
fold me to your breast !

Ah, let me weep my fill once more, and
cry myself to rest !

To rest ? to rest and wake no more were
better rest for me,

Than to waken every morning to that
face I loathe to see : .

III.

I envied your sweet slumber, all night so
calm you lay,

The night was calm, the morn is calm,
and like another day ;

But I could wish yon moaning sea would
rise and burst the shore,
And such a whirlwind blow these woods,
as never blew before.

IV

For, one by one, the stars went down
across the gleaming pane,
And project after project rose, and all of
them were vain ;

The blackthorn-blossom fades and falls
and leaves the bitter sloe,

The hope I catch at vanishes and youth
is turn'd to woe.

V.

Come, speak a little comfort ! all night
I pray'd with tears,

And yet no comfort came to me, and
now the morn appears,

When he will tear me from your side,
who bought me for his slave :

This father pays his debt with me, and
weds me to my grave.

VI.

What father, this or mine, was he, who,
on that summer day

When I had fall'n from off the crag we
clamber'd up in play,

Found, fear'd me dead, and groan'd, and
took and kiss'd me, and again

He kiss'd me ; and I loved him then ;
he *was* my father then.

VII.

No father now, the tyrant vassal of a
tyrant vice !

The Godless Jephtha vows his child . . .
to one cast of the dice.

These ancient woods, this Hall at last
will go—perhaps have gone,

Except his own meek daughter yield her
life, heart, soul to one—

VIII.

To one who knows I scorn him. O the
formal mocking bow,

The cruel smile, the courtly phrase that
 masks his malice now—
 But often in the sidelong eyes a gleam of
 all things ill—
 It is not Love but Hate that weds a
 bride against her will;

IX.

Hate, that would pluck from this true
 breast the locket that I wear,
 The precious crystal into which I braided
 Edwin's hair!
 The love that keeps this heart alive beats
 on it night and day—
 One golden curl, his golden gift, before
 he past away.

X.

He left us weeping in the woods; his
 boat was on the sand;
 How slowly down the rocks he went,
 how loth to quit the land!
 And all my life was darken'd, as I saw
 the white sail run,
 And darken, up that lane of light into
 the setting sun.

XI.

How often have we watch'd the sun fade
 from us thro' the West,
 And follow Edwin to those isles, those
 islands of the Blest!
 Is *he* not there? would I were there, the
 friend, the bride, the wife,
 With him, where summer never dies,
 with Love, the Sun of life!

XII.

O would I were in Edwin's arms—once
 more—to feel his breath
 Upon my cheek—on Edwin's ship, with
 Edwin, ev'n in death,
 Tho' all about the shuddering wreck the
 death-white sea should rave,
 Or if lip were laid to lip on the pillows
 of the wave.

XIII.

Shall I take *him*? I kneel with *him*? I
 swear and swear forsworn
 To love him most, whom most I loathe,
 to honour whom I scorn?
 The Fiend would yell, the grave would
 yawn, my mother's ghost would
 rise—
 To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the
 blackest of all lies!

XIV.

Why—rather than that hand in mine,
 tho' every pulse would freeze,
 I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of
 some foul disease:
 Wed him? I will not wed him, let them
 spurn me from the doors,
 And I will wander till I die about the
 barren moors.

XV.

The dear, mad bride who stabb'd her
 bridegroom on her bridal night—
 If mad, then I am mad, but sane, if she
 were in the right.
 My father's madness makes me mad—
 but words are only words!
 I am not mad, not yet, not quite—There!
 listen how the birds

XVI.

Begin to warble yonder in the budding
 orchard trees!
 The lark has past from earth to Heaven
 upon the morning breeze!
 How gladly, were I one of those, how
 early would I wake!
 And yet the sorrow that I bear is sorrow
 for *his* sake.

XVII.

They love their mates, to whom they
 sing; or else their songs, that meet
 The morning with such music, would
 never be so sweet!
 And tho' these fathers will not hear, the
 blessed Heavens are just,

And Love is fire, and burns the feet
would trample it to dust.

XVIII.

A door was open'd in the house—who?
who? my father sleeps!
A stealthy foot upon the stair! he—some
one—this way creeps!
If he? yes, he . . . lurks, listens, fears
his victim may have fled—
He! where is some sharp-pointed thing?
he comes, and finds me dead.

XIX.

Not he, not yet! and time to act—but
how my temples burn!
And idle fancies flutter me, I know not
where to turn;
Speak to me, sister; counsel me; this
marriage must not be.
You only know the love that makes the
world a world to me!

XX.

Our gentle mother, had *she* lived—but
we were left alone:
That other left us to ourselves; he cared
not for his own;
So all the summer long we roam'd in
these wild woods of ours,
My Edwin loved to call us then 'His
two wild woodland flowers.'

XXI.

Wild flowers blowing side by side in
God's free light and air,
Wild flowers of the secret woods, when
Edwin found us there,
Wild woods in which we roved with him,
and heard his passionate vow,
Wild woods in which we rove no more,
if we be parted now!

XXII.

You will not leave me thus in grief to
wander forth forlorn;

We never changed a bitter word, not
once since we were born;
Our dying mother join'd our hands; she
knew this father well;
She bad us love, like souls in Heaven,
and now I fly from Hell,

XXIII.

And you with me; and we shall light
upon some lonely shore,
Some lodge within the waste sea-dunes,
and hear the waters roar,
And see the ships from out the West go
dipping thro' the foam,
And sunshine on that sail at last which
brings our Edwin home.

XXIV.

But look, the morning grows apace, and
lights the old church-tower,
And lights the clock! the hand points
five—O me—it strikes the hour—
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever
ills betide!
Arise, my own true sister, come forth!
the world is wide.

XXV.

And yet my heart is ill at ease, my eyes
are dim with dew,
I seem to see a new-dug grave up yonder
by the yew!
If we should never more return, but
wander hand in hand
With breaking hearts, without a friend,
and in a distant land.

XXVI.

O sweet, they tell me that the world is
hard, and harsh of mind,
But can it be so hard, so harsh, as those
that should be kind?
That matters not: let come what will;
at last the end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is
equal to endure.

TOMORROW.

I.

HER, that yer Honour was spakin' to?
 Whin, yer Honour? last year—
 Standin' here be the bridge, when last
 yer Honour was here?
 An' yer Honour ye gev her the top of the
 mornin', 'Tomorra' says she.
 What did they call her, yer Honour?
 They call'd her Molly Magee.
 An' yer Honour's the throe ould blood
 that always manes to be kind,
 But there's rason in all things, yer
 Honour, for Molly was out of her
 mind.

II.

Shure, an' meself remimbers wan night
 comin' down be the sthrame,
 An' it seems to me now like a bit of
 yisther-day in a dhrame—
 Here where yer Honour seen her—there
 was but a slip of a moon,
 But I hard thim—Molly Magee wid her
 batchelor, Danny O'Roon—
 'You've been takin' a dhrop o' the
 crathur' an' Danny says 'Troth,
 an' I been
 Dhrinkin' yer health wid Shamus O'Shea
 at Katty's shebeen;¹
 But I must be lavin' ye soon.' 'Ochone
 are ye goin' away?'
 'Goin' to cut the Sassenach whate' he
 says 'over the say'—
 'An' whin will ye meet me agin?' an' I
 hard him 'Molly asthore,
 I'll meet you agin tomorra,' says he, 'be
 the chapel-door.'
 'An' whin are ye goin' to lave me?'
 'O' Monday mornin'' says he;
 'An' shure thin ye'll meet me tomorra?'
 'Tomorra, tomorra, Machree!'
 Thin Molly's ould mother, yer Honour,
 that had no likin' for Dan,
 Call'd from her cabin an' tould her to
 come away from the man,

¹ Grog-shop.

An' Molly Magee kem flyin' across me,
 as light as a lark,
 An' Dan stood there for a minute, an'
 thin wint into the dark.
 But wirrah! the storm that night—the
 tundher, an' rain, that fell,
 An' the sthrames runnin' down at the
 back o' the glin'ud 'a dhrowned
 Hell.

III.

But airth 'was at pace nixt mornin', an'
 Hiven in its glory smiled,
 As the Holy Mother o' Glory that smiles
 at her sleepin' child—
 Ethen—she stept an the chapel-green,
 an' she turn'd herself roun'
 Wid a diamond dhrop in her eye, for
 Danny was not to be foun',
 An' many's the time that I watch'd her
 at mass lettin' down the tear,
 For the Divil a Danny was there, yer
 Honour, for forty year.

IV.

Och, Molly Magee, wid the red o' the
 rose an' the white o' the May,
 An' yer hair as black as the night, an'
 yer eyes as bright as the day!
 Achora, yer laste little whisper was
 sweet as the lilt of a bird!
 Acushla, ye set me heart batin' to music
 wid ivery word!
 An' sorra the Queen wid her sceptre in
 sich an illigant han',
 An' the fall of yer foot in the dance was
 as light as snow an the lan',
 An' the sun kem out of a cloud whiniver
 ye walkt in the shtreet,
 An' Shamus O'Shea was yer shadda, an'
 laid himself undher yer feet,
 An' I loved ye meself wid a heart and a
 half, me darlin', and he
 'Ud 'a shot his own sowl dead for a kiss
 of ye, Molly Magee.

V.

But shure we wor betther frinds whin I
 crack'd his skull for her sake,

An' he ped me back wid the best he
could give at ould Donovan's
wake—

For the boys wor about her agin whin
Dan didn't come to the fore,

An' Shamus along wid the rest, but she
put thim all to the door.

An', afther, I thried her meself av the
bird 'ud come to me call,

But Molly, begorrah, 'ud listhen to
naither at all, at all.

VI.

An' her nabours an frinds 'ud consowl an'
condowl wid her, airly and late,

'Your Danny,' they says, 'niver crasst
over say to the Sassenach whate ;

He's gone to the States, aroon, an' he's
married another wife,

An' ye'll niver set eyes an the face of
the thraithur agin in life !

An' to dhrame of a married man, death
alive, is a mortal sin.'

But Molly says 'I'd his hand-promise, an'
shure he'll meet me agin.'

VII.

An' afther her paärints had inter'd glory,
an' both in wan day,

She began to spake to herself, the
crathur, an' whisper, an' say

'Tomorra, Tomorra !' an' Father Mo-
lowny he tuk her in han',

'Molly, you're manin', he says, 'me
dear, av I undherstan',

That ye'll meet your paärints agin an'
yer Danny O'Roon afore God

Wid his blessed Marthys an' Saints ;'
an' she gev him a frindly nod,

'Tomorra, Tomorra,' she says, an' she
didn't intind to desave,

But her wits wor dead, an' her hair was
as white as the snow an a grave.

VIII.

Arrah now, here last month they wor
diggin' the bog, an' they foun'

Dhrownded in black bog-wather a corp
lyin' undher groun'.

IX.

Yer Honour's own agint, he says to me
wanst, at Katty's shebeen,

'The Divil take all the black lan', for a
blessin' 'ud come wid the green !'

An' where 'ud the poor man, thin, cut
his bit o' turf for the fire ?

But och ! bad scran to the bogs whin
they swallies the man intire !

An' sorra the bog that's in Hiven wid all
the light an' the glow,

An' there's hate enough, shure, widout
thim in the Divil's kitchen below.

X.

Thim ould blind nagers in Agypt, I hard
his Riverence say,

Could keep their haithen kings in the
flesh for the Jidgemint day,

An', faix, be the piper o' Moses, they kep
the cat an' the dog,

But it 'ud 'a been aisier work av they
lived be an Irish bog.

XI.

How-an-iver they laid this body they
foun' an the grass

Be the chapel-door, an' the people 'ud
see it that wint in to mass—

But a frish gination had riz, an' most
of the ould was few,

An' I didn't know him meself, an' nōne
of the parish knew.

XII.

But Molly kem limpin' up wid her stick,
she was lamed iv a knee,

Thin a slip of a gossoon call'd, 'Div ye
know him, Molly Magee ?'

An' she stood up strait as the Queen of
the world—she lifted her head—

'He said he would meet me tomorra !'
an' dhropt down dead an the dead.

XIII.

Och, Molly, we thought, machree, ye
would start back agin into life,

Whin we laid yez, aich be aich, at yer
wake like husban' an' wife.

Sorra the dhry eye thin but was wet for
the frinds that was gone !
Sorra the silent throat but we hard it
cryin' 'Ochone !'

An' Shamus O'Shea that has now ten
childer, hansome an' tall,

Him an' his childer wor keenin' as if he
had lost thim all.

XIV.

Thin his Riverence buried thim both in
wan grave be the dead boor-tree,¹

The young man Danny O'Roon wid his
ould woman, Molly Magee.

XV.

May all the flowers o' Jeroosilim blossom
an' spring from the grass,

Imbrashin' an' kissin' aich other—as ye
did—over yer Crass !

An' the lark fly out o' the flowers wid his
song to the Sun an' the Moon,

An' tell thim in Hiven about Molly Magee
an' her Danny O'Roon,

Till Holy St. Pether gets up wid his kays
an' opens the gate !

An' shure, be the Crass, that's betther
nor cuttin' the Sassenach whate

To be there wid the Blessed Mother, an'
Saints an' Marthys galore,

An' singin' yer 'Aves' an' 'Pathers' for
iver an' ivermore.

XVI.

An' now that I tould yer Honour what-
iver I hard an' seen,

Yer Honour 'ill give me a thrifle to dhrink
yer health in potheen.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS.

I.

MILK for my sweet-arts, Bess ! fur it mun
be the time about now

When Molly cooms in fro' the far-end
close wi' her paäils fro' the cow.

¹ Elder-tree.

Eh ! tha be new to the plaäce—thou'rt
gaäpin'—doesn't tha see
I calls 'em arter the fellers es once was
sweet upo' me ?

II.

Naäy to be sewer it be past 'er time.
What maäkes 'er sa laäte ?

Goä to the laäne at the back, an' looök
thruf Maddison's gaäte !

III.

Sweet-arts ! Molly belike may 'a lighted
to-night upo' one.

Sweet-arts ! thanks to the Lord that I
niver not listen'd to noän !

So I sits i' my oän armchair wi' my oän
kettle theree o' the hob,

An' Tommy the fust, an' Tommy the
second, an' Steevie an' Rob.

IV.

Rob, coom oop 'ere o' my knee. Thou
sees that i' spite o' the men

I 'a kep' thruf thick an' thin my two
'oonderd a-year to mysen ;

Yis ! thaw tha call'd me es pretty es ony
lass i' the Shere ;

An' thou be es pretty a Tabby, but Robby
I seed thruf ya theree.

V.

Feyther 'ud saäy I wur ugly es sin, an' I
beänt not vaän,

But I niver wur downright hugly, thaw
soom 'ud 'a thowt ma plaäin,

An' I wasn't sa plaäin i' pink ribbons, ye
said I wur pretty i' pinks,

An' I liked to 'ear it I did, but I beänt
sich a fool as ye thinks ;

Ye was stroäkin ma down wi' the 'air, as
I be a-stroäkin o' you,

But whiniver I looöked i' the glass I wur
sewer that it couldn't be true ;

Niver wur pretty, not I, but ye knaw'd it
wur pleasant to 'ear,

Thaw it warn't not me es wur pretty, but
my two 'oonderd a-year.

VI.

D'ya mind the murnin' when we was a-walkin' together, an' stood
 By the claây'd-ooop pond, that the foälk
 be sa scared at, i' Gigglesby wood,
 Wheer the poor wench drowndid hersen,
 black Sal, es 'ed been disgraaced?
 An' I feel'd thy arm es I stood wur a-
 creeäpin about my waaist;
 An' me es wur allus afear'd of a man's
 gittin' ower fond,
 I sidled awaây an' awaây till I plumpt foot
 fust i' the pond;
 And, Robby, I niver 'a liked tha sa well,
 as I did that daây,
 Fur tha joompt in thysen, an' tha hoickt
 my feet wi' a flop fro' the claây.
 Ay, stick oop thy back, an' set oop thy
 taäil, tha may gie ma a kiss,
 Fur I walk'd wi' tha all the way hoam
 an' wur niver sa nigh saäyin' Yis.
 But wa boäth was i' sich a clat we was
 shaämed to cross Gigglesby Greeän,
 Fur a cat may loök at a king thou knaws
 but the cat mun be cleän.
 Sa we boäth on us kep out o' the
 winders o' Gigglesby Hinn—
 Naäy, but the claws o' tha ! quiet ! they
 pricks cleän thruf to the skín—
 An' wa boäth slinkt 'oäm by the brokken
 shed i' the laäne at the back,
 Wheer the poodle runn'd at tha once, an'
 thou runn'd oop o' the thack;
 An' tha squeedg'd my 'and i' the shed,
 fur there we was forced to 'ide,
 Fur I seed that Steevie wur coomin', and
 one o' the Tommies beside.

VII.

Theree now, what art'a mewin at, Steevie?
 for owt I can tell—
 Robby wur fust to be sewer, or I mowt
 'a liked tha as well.

VIII.

But, Robby, I thowt o' tha all the while
 I wur chaängin' my gown,
 An' I thowt shall I chaänge my staäte?
 but, O Lord, upo' coomin' down—

My bran-new carpet es fresh es a midder
 o' flowers i' Maây—
 Why 'edn't tha wipid thy shoes? it wur
 clatted all ower wi' claây.
 An' I could 'a cried ammost, fur I seed
 that it couldn't be,
 An' Robby I gied tha a raätin that sattled
 thy coortin o' me.
 An' Molly an' me was agreed, as we was
 a-cleänin' the floor,
 That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble
 an' plague wi' indoor.
 But I rued it arter a bit, fur I stuck to
 tha moor na the rest,
 But I couldn't 'a lived wi' a man an' I
 knaws it be all fur the best.

IX.

Naây—let ma stroäk tha down till I
 maäkes tha es smooth es silk,
 But if I 'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd
 not 'a been worth thy milk,
 Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a
 left me the work to do,
 And 'a taäen to the bottle beside, so es
 all that I 'ears be true;
 But I loovs tha to maäke thysen 'appy,
 an' soa purr awaây, my dear,
 Thou 'ed wellnigh purr'd ma awaây fro'
 'my oän two 'oonderd a-year.

X.

Sweärin agean, you Toms, as ye used to
 do twelve year sin' !
 Ye niver 'eärd Steevie sweär 'cep' it wur
 at a dog coomin' in,
 An' boath o' ye mun be fools to be hallus
 a-shawin' your claws,
 Fur I niver cared nothink for neither—
 an' one o' ye deäd ye knaws !
 Coom give hoäver then, weant ye? I
 warrant ye soom fine daây—
 Theree, lig down—I shall hev to gie one
 or tother awaây.
 Can't ye taäke pattern by Steevie? ye
 shant hev a drop fro' the paäil.
 Steevie be right good manners bang thruf
 to the tip o' the taäil.

XI.

Robby, git down wi'tha, wilt tha? let
 Steevie coom oop o' my knee.
 Steevie, my lad, thou 'ed very nigh been
 the Steevie fur me!
 Robby wur fust to be sewer, 'e wur burn
 an' bred i' the 'ouse,
 But thou be es 'ansom a tabby es iver
 patted a mouse.

XII.

An' I beänt not vaäin, but I knaws I 'ed
 led tha a quieter life
 Nor her wi' the hepitaph yonder! "A
 faäithful an' loovin' wife!"
 An' 'cos o' thy farm by the beck, an' thy
 windmill oop o' the croft,
 Tha thowt tha would marry ma, did tha?
 but that wur a bit ower soft,
 Thaw thou was es soäber es daäy, wi' a
 niced red faäce, an' es cleän
 Es a shillin' fresh fro' the mint wi' a bran-
 new 'eäd o' the Queeän,
 An' thy farmin' es cleän es thysen', fur,
 Steevie, tha kep' it sa neät
 That I niver not spied sa much es a
 poppy along wi' the wheät,
 An' the wool of a thistle a-flyin' an'
 seeädin' tha haätet to see;
 'Twur es bad es a battle-twig¹ 'ere i' my
 oän blue chaumber to me.
 Ay, roob thy whiskers ageän ma, fur I
 could 'a taäen to tha well,
 But fur thy bairns, poor Steevie, a
 bouncin' boy an' a gell.

XIII.

An' thou was es fond o' thy bairns es I
 be mysen o' my cats,
 But I niver not wish'd fur childer, I
 hevn't naw likin' fur brats;
 Pretty anew when ya dresses 'em oop,
 an' they goäs fur a walk,
 Or sits wi' their 'ands afoor 'em, an'
 doesn't not 'inder the talk!
 But their bottles o' pap, an' their mucky
 bibs, an' the clats an' the clouts,

¹ Earwig.

An' their mashin' their toys to pieäces
 an' maäkin' ma deäf wi' their
 shouts,
 An' hallus a-joompin' about ma as if they
 was set upo' springs,
 An' a haxin' ma hawkard questions, an'
 saäyin' ondecnt things,
 An' a-callin' ma 'hugly' mayhap to my
 faäce, or a teärin' my gown—
 Dear! dear! dear! I mun part them
 Tommies—Steevie git down.

XIV.

Ye be wuss nor the men-tommies, you.
 I tell'd ya, na moor o' that!
 Tom, lig theere o' the cushion, an' tother
 Tom 'ere o' the mat.

XV.

Theere! I ha' master'd *them*! Hed I
 married the Tommies—O Lord,
 To loove an' obaäy the Tommies! I
 couldn't 'a stuck by my word.
 To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when
 Molly 'd put out the light,
 By a man coqmin' in wi' a hiccup at ony
 hour o' the night!
 An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the
 mud o' 'is boots o' the stairs,
 An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse,
 an' the mark o' 'is 'eäd o' the
 chairs!
 An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let
 me 'a hed my oän waäy,
 Sa I likes 'em best wi' taäils when they
 'evn't a word to saäy.

XVI.

An' I sits i' my oän little parlour, an'
 sarved by my oän little lass,
 Wi' my oän little garden outside, an' my
 oän bed o' sparrow-grass,
 An' my oän door-poorch wi' the wood-
 bine an' jessmine a-dressin' it
 greeän,
 An' my oän fine Jackman i' purple a
 roäbin' the 'ouse like a Queeän,

XVII.

An' the little gells bobs to ma hoffens es
 I be abroad i' the läänes,
 When I goäs fur to coomfut the poor es
 be down wi' their haäches an'
 their pääins:
 An' a haäf-pot o' jam, or a mossel o' meät
 when it beänt too dear,
 They maäkes ma a graäter Laädy nor 'er
 i' the mansion theer,
 Hes 'es hallus to hax of a man how much
 to spare or to spend;
 An' a spinster I be an' I will be, if soä
 pleäse God, to the hend.

XVIII.

Mew! mew!—Bess wi' the milk! what
 ha maäde our Molly sa lääte?
 It should 'a been 'ere by seven, an' theere
 —it be strikin' height—
 'Cushie wur craäzed fur 'er cauf' well—I
 'eärd 'er a maäkin' 'er moän,
 An' I thowt to mysen 'thank God that I
 hevn't naw cauf o' my oän.'
 There!
 Set it down!
 Now Robby!
 You Tommies shall waäit to-night
 Till Robby an' Steevie 'es 'ed their lap
 —an' it sarves ye right.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

LATE, my grandson! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,
 Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,
 I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine;
 And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past;
 Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last.

'Curse him!' curse your fellow-victim? call him dotard in your rage?
 Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she was not wise;
 I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—
 Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my neck had flown;
 I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken for her sake?
 You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid child;
 But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father, mother—be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound.

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now—
I this old white-headed dreamer stooped and kiss'd her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost at sea;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true as he was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall!

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and slew the wife
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust. •

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted victors they.

Ages after, white in Asia, he that led the wild Moguls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest of the great;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd himself a curse:
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller? which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the still unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan?
 'Kill your enemy, for you hate him,' still, 'your enemy' was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the helpless horse, and drive
 Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at midnight, found at morn,
 Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are we men?
 Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers
 Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how all will end?
 Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,
 Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise:
 When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,
 Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals, equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.
 Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language loom
 Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her? shall we yield?
 Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial sceptre now,
 Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,
 Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find,
 Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;
 So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right divine;
 Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the sickening game;
 Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known to all;
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them 'old experience is a fool,'
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhymester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too into the abyss.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the beast again?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your lawless din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce becomes mine age—
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray:
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and Jacquerie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length with all the visions of my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or deaf or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day and at this hour,
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour or in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, 'Would to God that we were there'?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword 'Evolution' here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the Whole.

* * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shatter'd wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your 'forward,' yours are hope and youth, but I
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain her earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson ! Death and Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest, rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have not lived in vain.

Youthful ! youth and age are scholars yet but in the lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and less:
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness !

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the 'Lion passant' from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political common-sense !

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have fled !
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of eighty years.

* * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of driving showers—
Peep the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Here to-night ! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll the Chapel bell !
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, 'I have loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd, and started from my side—

Silent echoes ! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the school, and drain'd the fen

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him ? who shall swear it cannot be ?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle with the game :
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of Locksley Hall.

PROLOGUE TO GENERAL HAMLEY.

OUR birches yellowing and from each
The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea;
And, gazing from this height alone,
We spoke of what had been
Most marvellous in the wars your own
Crimean eyes had seen;
And now—like old-world inns that take
Some warrior for a sign
That therewithin a guest may make
True cheer with honest wine—
Because you heard the lines I read
Nor utter'd word of blame,
I dare without your leave to head
These rhymings with your name,
Who know you but as one of those
I fain would meet again,
Yet know you, as your England knows
That you and all your men
Were soldiers to her heart's desire,
When, in the vanish'd year,
You saw the league-long rampart-fire
Flare from Tel-el-Kebir
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,
And Wolseley overthrew
Arâbi, and the stars in heaven
Paled, and the glory grew.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA.

OCTOBER 25, 1854.

I.

THE charge of the gallant three hundred,
the Heavy Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands
of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the
valley—and stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred
were riding by
When the points of the Russian lances
arose in the sky;
And he call'd 'Left wheel into line!
and they wheel'd and obey'd.
Then he look'd at the host that had
halted he knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he bad his
trumpeter sound
To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as
he waved his blade
To the gallant three hundred whose glory
will never die—
'Follow,' and up the hill, up the hill, up
the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II.

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge,
and the might of the fight!

Thousands of horsemen had gather'd
 there on the height,
 With a wing push'd out to the left and
 a wing to the right,
 And who shall escape if they close? but
 he dash'd up alone
 Thro' the great gray slope of men,
 Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
 Like an Englishman there and then;
 All in a moment follow'd with force
 Three that were next in their fiery
 course,
 Wedged themselves in between horse
 and horse,
 Fought for their lives in the narrow gap
 they had made—
 Four amid thousands! and up the hill,
 up the hill,
 Gallopt the gallant three hundred, the
 Heavy Brigade.

III.

Fell like a cannonshot,
 Burst like a thunderbolt,
 Crash'd like a hurricane,
 Broke thro' the mass from below,
 Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
 Plunged up and down, to and fro,
 Rode flashing blow upon blow,
 Brave Inniskillens and Greys
 Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
 And some of us, all in amaze,
 Who were held for a while from the
 fight,
 And were only standing at gaze,
 When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
 Folded its wings from the left and the
 right,
 And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
 O mad for the charge and the battle
 were we,
 When our own good redcoats sank from
 sight,
 Like drops of blood in a dark-gray
 sea,
 And we turn'd to each other, whispering,
 all dismay'd,
 'Lost are the gallant three hundred of
 Scarlett's Brigade!'

IV.

'Lost one and all' were the words
 Mutter'd in our dismay;
 But they rode like Victors and Lords
 Thro' the forest of lances and swords
 In the heart of the Russian hordes,
 They rode, or they stood at bay—
 Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
 Down with the bridle-hand drew
 The foe from the saddle and threw
 Underfoot there in the fray—
 Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
 In the wave of a stormy day;
 Till suddenly shock upon shock
 Stagger'd the mass from without,
 Drove it in wild disarray,
 For our men gallopt up with a cheer and
 a shout,
 And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and
 reel'd
 Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out
 of the field,
 And over the brow and away.

V.

Glory to each and to all, and the charge
 that they made!
 Glory to all the three hundred, and all
 the Brigade!

NOTE.—The 'three hundred' of the 'Heavy Brigade' who made this famous charge were the Scots Greys and the 2nd squadron of Inniskillings; the remainder of the 'Heavy Brigade' subsequently dashing up to their support.

The 'three' were Scarlett's aide-de-camp, Elliot, and the trumpeter and Shegog the orderly, who had been close behind him.

EPILOGUE.

IRENE.

NOT this way will you set your name
 A star among the stars.

POET.

What way?

IRENE.

You praise when you should blame
The barbarism of wars.
A juster epoch has begun.

POET.

Yet tho' this cheek be gray,
And that bright hair the modern sun,
Those eyes the blue to-day,
You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,
And some new Spirit o'erbear the old,
Or Trade re-frain the Powers
From war with kindly links of gold,
Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
That wheel between the poles.
But since, our mortal shadow, Ill
To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of Will
In worlds before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
Or Might would rule alone;
And who loves War for War's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse;
But let the patriot-soldier take
His meed of fame in verse;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior's noble deed—
A crown the Singer hopes may last,
For so the deed endures;
But Song will vanish in the Vast;
And that large phrase of yours
'A Star among the stars,' my dear,
Is girlish talk at best;
For dare we dally with the sphere
As he did half in jest,
Old Horace? 'I will strike' said he
'The stars with head sublime,'
But scarce could see, as now we see,
The man in Space and Time,

So drew perchance a happier lot
Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
The fires that arch this dusky dot—
Yon myriad-worlded way—
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities;
And so does Earth; for Homer's fame,
Tho' carved in harder stone—
The falling drop will make his name
As mortal as my own.

IRENE.

No!

POET.

Let it live then—ay, till when?
Earth passes, all is lost
In what they prophesy, our wise men,
Sun-flame or sunless frost,
And deed and song alike are swept
Away, and all in vain
As far as man can see, except
The man himself remain;
And tho', in this lean age forlorn,
Too many a voice may cry
That man can have no after-morn,
Not yet of these am I.
The man remains, and whatsoe'er
He wrought of good or brave
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year
That dawns behind the grave.

And here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead
'The song that nerves a nation's heart,
Is in itself a deed.'

TO VIRGIL.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE
MANTUANS FOR THE NINETEENTH
CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH.

I.

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,

Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's
pyre;

II.

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works
and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden
phrase;

III.

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse
and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

IV.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen
bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd
bound with flowers;

V.

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

VI.

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal
Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human
kind;

VII.

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom
shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise
no more;

VIII.

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's
dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial
Rome—

IX.

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds
her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human
race,

X.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day
began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

THE DEAD PROPHET.

182—

I.

DEAD!
And the Muses cried with a stormy cry
'Send them no more, for evermore.
Let the people die.'

II.

Dead!
'Is it *he* then brought so low?'
And a careless people flock'd from the
fields
With a purse to pay for the show.

III.

Dead, who had served his time,
Was one of the people's kings,
Had labour'd in lifting them out of slime,
And showing them, souls have wings!

IV.

Dumb on the winter heath he lay.
 His friends had stript him bare,
 And roll'd his nakedness everyway
 That all the crowd might stare.

V.

A storm-worn signpost not to be read,
 And a tree with a moulder'd nest
 On its barkless bones, stood stark by the
 dead;
 And behind him, low in the West,

VI.

With shifting ladders of shadow and light,
 And blurr'd in colour and form,
 The sun hung over the gates of Night,
 And glared at a coming storm.

VII.

Then glided a vulturous Beldam forth,
 That on dumb death had thriven;
 They call'd her 'Reverence' here upon
 earth,
 And 'The Curse of the Prophet' in
 Heaven.

VIII.

She knelt—'We worship him'—all but
 wept—
 'So great so noble was he!'
 She clear'd her sight, she arose, she swept
 The dust of earth from her knee.

IX.

'Great! for he spoke and the people
 heard,
 And his eloquence caught like a flame
 From zone to zone of the world, till his
 Word
 Had won him a noble name.

X.

Noble! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
 Thro' palace and cottage door,
 For he touch'd on the whole sad planet
 of man,
 The kings and the rich and the poor;

XI.

And he sung not alone of an old sun set,
 But a sun coming up in his youth!
 Great and noble—O yes—but yet—
 For man is a lover of Truth,

XII.

And bound to follow, wherever she go
 Stark-naked, and up or down,
 Thro' her high hill-passes of stainless
 snow,
 Or the foulest sewer of the town—

XIII.

Noble and great—O ay—but then,
 Tho' a prophet should have his due,
 Was he noblier-fashion'd than other men?
 Shall we see to it, I and you?

XIV.

For since he would sit on a Prophet's
 seat,
 As a lord of the Human soul,
 We needs must scan him from head to
 feet
 Were it but for a wart or a mole?'

XV.

His wife and his child stood by him in
 tears,
 But she—she push'd them aside,
 'Tho' a name may last for a thousand
 years,
 Yet a truth is a truth,' she cried.

XVI.

And she that had haunted his pathway
 still,
 Had often truckled and cower'd
 When he rose in his wrath, and had
 yielded her will
 To the master, as overpower'd,

XVII.

She tumbled his helpless corpse about.
 'Small blemish upon the skin!
 But I think we know what is fair without
 Is often as foul within.'

XVIII.

She crouch'd, she tore him part from part,
 And out of his body she drew
 The red 'Blood-eagle'¹ of liver and
 heart;
 She held them up to the view;

XIX.

She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
 And all the people were pleased;
 'See, what a little heart,' she said,
 'And the liver is half-diseased!'

XX.

She tore the Prophet after death,
 And the people paid her well.
 Lightnings flicker'd along the heath;
 One shriek'd 'The fires of Hell!'

EARLY SPRING.

I.

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
 Makes all things new,
 And domes the red-plow'd hills
 With loving blue;
 The blackbirds have their wills,
 The throstles too.

II.

Opens a door in Heaven;
 From skies of glass
 A Jacob's ladder falls
 On greening grass,
 And o'er the mountain-walls
 Young angels pass.

III.

Before them fleets the shower,
 And burst the buds,
 And shine the level lands,
 And flash the floods;
 The stars are from their hands
 Flung thro' the woods,

¹ Old Viking term for lungs, liver, etc., when torn by the conqueror out of the body of the conquered.

IV.

The woods with living airs
 How softly fann'd,
 Light airs from where the deep,
 All down the sand,
 Is breathing in his sleep,
 Heard by the land.

V.

O follow, leaping blood,
 The season's lure!
 O heart, look down and up
 Serene, secure,
 Warm as the crocus cup,
 Like snowdrops, pure!

VI.

Past, Future glimpse and fade
 Thro' some slight spell,
 A gleam from yonder vale,
 Some far blue fell,
 And sympathies, how frail,
 In sound and smell!

VII.

Till at thy chuckled note,
 Thou twinkling bird,
 The fairy fancies range,
 And, lightly stirr'd,
 Ring little bells of change
 From word to word.

VIII.

For now the Heavenly Power
 Makes all things new,
 And thaws the cold, and fills
 The flower with dew;
 The blackbirds have their wills,
 The poets too.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS.

Midnight, June 30, 1879.

I.

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
 The breakers lash the shores:

The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors :

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II.

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark :

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III.

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill ;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine !

'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE.'

Row us out from Desenzano, to your
Sirmione row !
So they row'd, and there we landed—' O
venusta Sirmio !'
There to me thro' all the groves of olive
in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the
purple flowers grow,
Came that 'Ave atque Vale' of the Poet's
hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-
hundred years ago,

'Frater Ave atque Vale'—as we wander'd
to and fro
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the
Garda Lake below
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-
silvery Sirmio !

HELEN'S TOWER.¹

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land.
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love in letter'd gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long !
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

EPITAPH ON LORD STRAT-
FORD DE REDCLIFFE.

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THOU third great Canning, stand among
our best
And noblest, now thy long day's work
hath ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
Who wert the voice of England in the
East.

EPITAPH
ON GENERAL GORDON.

IN THE GORDON BOYS' NATIONAL
MEMORIAL HOME NEAR WOKING.

WARRIOR of God, man's friend, and
tyrant's foe,
Now somewhere dead far in the waste
Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has never borne a nobler
man.

¹ Written at the request of my friend, Lord
Dufferin.

EPITAPH ON CAXTON.

IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER.

FIAT LUX (his motto).

THY prayer was 'Light—more Light—
while Time shall last!'
Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light
would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

TO THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.

O PATRIOT Statesman, be thou wise to
know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession; still be bold
Not only to slight praise but suffer scorn;
And be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the
year
Against the day; thy voice, a music
heard
Thro' all the yells and counter-yells of
feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to
make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing
Law.

HANDS ALL ROUND.

FIRST pledge our Queen this solemn
night,
Then drink to England, every guest;
That man's the best Cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.
May freedom's oak for ever live
With stronger life from day to day;
That man's the true Conservative
Who lops the moulder'd branch away.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!

To this great cause of Freedom drink,
my friends,
And the great name of England, round
and round.

To all the loyal hearts who long
To keep our English Empire whole!
To all our noble sons, the strong
New England of the Southern Pole!
To England under Indian skies,
To those dark millions of her realm!
To Canada whom we love and prize,
Whatever statesman hold the helm.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great name of England drink,
my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and
round.

To all our statesmen so they be
True leaders of the land's desire!
To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire!
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro' craven fears of being great.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great cause of Freedom drink,
my friends,
And the great name of England, round
and round.

FREEDOM.

I.

O THOU so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol;

II.

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green;

III.

For thou—when Athens reign'd and
 Rome,
 Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with
 pain
 To mark in many a freeman's home
 The slave, the scourge, the chain;

IV.

O follower of the Vision, still
 In motion to the distant gleam,
 Howe'er blind force and brainless will
 May jar thy golden dream

V.

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
 Of civic Hate no more to be,
 Of Love to leaven all the mass,
 Till every Soul be free;

VI.

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
 By changes all too fierce and fast
 This order of Her Human Star,
 This heritage of the past;

VII.

O scorner of the party cry
 That wanders from the public good,
 Thou—when the nations rear on high
 Their idol smear'd with blood,

VIII.

And when they roll their idol down—
 Of saner worship sanely proud;
 Thou loather of the lawless crown
 As of the lawless crowd;

IX.

How long thine ever-growing mind
 Hath still'd the blast and strown the
 wave,
 Tho' some of late would raise a wind
 To sing thee to thy grave,

X.

Men loud against all forms of power—
 Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous
 tongues—
 Expecting all things in an hour—
 Brass mouths and iron lungs!

TO H.R.H. PRINCESS
BEATRICE.

Two Suns of Love make day of human
 life,
 Which else with all its pains, and griefs,
 and deaths,
 Were utter darkness—one, the Sun of
 dawn
 That brightens thro' the Mother's tender
 eyes,
 And warms the child's awakening world
 —and one
 The later-rising Sun of spousal Love,
 Which from her household orbit draws
 the child
 To move in other spheres. The Mother
 weeps
 At that white funeral of the single life,
 Her maiden daughter's marriage; and
 her tears
 Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the
 child
 Is happy—ev'n in leaving *her*! but Thou,
 True daughter, whose all-faithful, filial
 eyes
 Have seen the loneliness of earthly thrones,
 Wilt neither quit the widow'd Crown,
 nor let
 This later light of Love have risen in vain,
 But moving thro' the Mother's home,
 between
 The two that love thee, lead a summer
 life,
 Sway'd by each Love, and swaying to
 each Love,
 Like some conjectured planet in mid
 heaven
 Between two Suns, and drawing down
 from both
 The light and genial warmth of double day.

THE FLEET.¹

I.

You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand

What England is, and what her all-in-all,

On you will come the curse of all the land,

Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

¹ The speaker said that 'he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to.'—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November 1886.*

II.

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,

Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—

Her ancient fame of Free—

Were she . . . a fallen state?

III.

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,

Her island-myrriads fed from alien lands—

The fleet of England is her all-in-all;

Her fleet is in your hands,

And in her fleet her Fate.

IV.

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,

If you should only compass her disgrace,

When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet

Will kick you from your place,

But then too late, too late.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN.

*Written at the Request of the Prince
of Wales.*

I.

WELCOME, welcome with one voice !

In your welfare we rejoice,

Sons and brothers that have sent,

From isle and cape and continent,

Produce of your field and flood,

Mount and mine, and primal wood ;

Works of subtle brain and hand,

And splendours of the morning land,

Gifts from every British zone ;

Britons, hold your own !

II

May we find, as ages run,
 The mother featured in the son ;
 And may yours for ever be
 That old strength and constancy
 Which has made your fathers great
 In our ancient island State,
 And wherever her flag fly,
 Glorifying between sea and sky,
 Makes the might of Britain known ;
 Britons, hold your own !

III.

Britain fought her sons of yore—
 Britain fail'd ; and never more,
 Careless of our growing kin,
 Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
 Men that in a narrower day—
 Unprophetic rulers they—
 Drove from out the mother's nest
 That young eagle of the West
 To forage for herself alone ;
 Britons, hold your own !

IV.

Sharers of our glorious past,
 Brothers, must we part at last ?
 Shall we not thro' good and ill
 Cleave to one another still ?
 Britain's myriad voices call,
 ' Sons, be welded each and all,
 Into one imperial whole,
 One with Britain, heart and soul !
 One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne !
 Britons, hold your own !

POETS AND THEIR BIBLIO- GRAPHIES.

OLD poets foster'd under friendlier skies,
 Old Virgil who would write ten lines,
 they say,
 At dawn, and lavish all the golden
 day
 To make them wealthier in his readers'
 eyes ;

And you, old popular Horace, you the
 wise
 Adviser of the nine-years-ponder'd lay,
 And you, that wear a wreath of sweeter
 bay,
 Catullus, whose dead songster never dies ;
 If, glancing downward on the kindly
 sphere
 That once had roll'd you round and
 round the Sun,
 You see your Art still shrined in
 human shelves,
 You should be jubilant that you flourish'd
 here
 Before the Love of Letters, overdone,
 Had swamped the sacred poets with
 themselves.

TO W. C. MACREADY.

1851.

FAREWELL, Macready, since to-night we
 part ;
 Full-handed thunders often have
 confessed
 Thy power, well-used to move the
 public breast.
 We thank thee with our voice, and from
 the heart.
 Farewell, Macready, since this night we
 part,
 Go, take thine honours home ; rank
 with the best,
 Garrick and statelier Kemble, and
 the rest
 Who made a nation purer through their
 art.
 Thine is it that our drama did not die,
 Nor flicker down to brainless panto-
 mime,
 And those gilt gauds men-children
 swarm to see.
 Farewell, Macready ; moral, grave, sub-
 lime ;
 Our Shakespeare's bland and universal
 eye
 Dwells pleased, through twice a
 hundred years, on thee.

DEMETER

AND OTHER POEMS.

TO THE MARQUIS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA.

I.

At times our Britain cannot rest,
At times her steps are swift and rash;
She moving, at her girdle clash
The golden keys of East and West.

II.

Not swift or rash, when late she lent
The sceptres of her West, her East,
To one, that ruling has increased
Her greatness and her self-content.

III.

Your rule has made the people love
Their ruler. Your viceregal days
Have added fulness to the phrase
Of 'Gauntlet in the velvet glove.'

IV.

But since your name will grow with Time,
Not all, as honouring your fair fame
Of Statesman, have I made the name
A golden portal to my rhyme:

V.

But more, that you and yours may know
From me and mine, how dear a debt
We owed you, and are owing yet
To you and yours, and still would owe.

VI.

For he—your India was his Fate,
And drew him over sea to you—
He fain had ranged her thro' and thro',
To serve her myriads and the State,—

VII.

A soul that, watch'd from earliest youth,
And on thro' many a brightening year,

Had never swerved for craft or fear,
By one side-path, from simple truth;

VIII.

Who might have chased and claspt
Renown
And caught her chaplet here—and there
In haunts of jungle-poison'd air
The flame of life went wavering down;

IX.

But ere he left your fatal shore,
And lay on that funereal boat,
Dying, 'Unspeakable' he wrote
'Their kindness,' and he wrote no more;

X.

And sacred is the latest word;
And now the Was, the Might-have-
been,
And those lone rites I have not seen,
And one drear sound I have not heard,

XI.

Are dreams that scarce will let me be,
Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When That within the coffin fell,
Fell—and flash'd into the Red Sea,

XII.

Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars. To question, why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine! and I may meet him soon;

XIII.

But while my life's late eve endures,
Nor settles into hueless gray,
My memories of his briefer day
Will mix with love for you and yours.

ON THE JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

I.

FIFTY times the rose has flower'd and faded,
Fifty times the golden harvest fallen,
Since our Queen assumed the globe, the sceptre.

II.

She beloved for a kindliness
Rare in Fable or History,
Queen, and Empress of India,
Crown'd so long with a diadem
Never worn by a worthier,
Now with prosperous auguries
Comes at last to the bounteous
Crowning year of her Jubilee.

III.

Nothing of the lawless, of the Despot,
Nothing of the vulgar, or vainglorious,
All is gracious, gentle, great and Queenly.

IV.

You then joyfully, all of you,
Set the mountain aflame to-night,
Shoot your stars to the firmament,
Deck your houses, illuminate
All your towns for a festival,
And in each let a multitude
Loyal, each, to the heart of it,
One full voice of allegiance,
Hail the fair Ceremonial
Of this year of her Jubilee.

V.

Queen, as true to womanhood as Queen-
hood,
Glorying in the glories of her people,
Sorrowing with the sorrows of the lowest!

VI.

You, that wanton in affluence,
Spare not now to be bountiful,
Call your poor to regale with you,
All the lowly, the destitute,

Make their neighbourhood health-
fuller,

Give your gold to the Hospital,
Let the weary be comforted,
Let the needy be banqueted,
Let the maim'd in his heart rejoice
At this glad Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

VII.

Henry's fifty years are all in shadow,
Gray with distance Edward's fifty sum-
mers,
Ev'n her Grandsire's fifty half forgotten.

VIII.

You, the Patriot Architect,
You that shape for Eternity,
Raise a stately memorial,
Make it regally gorgeous,
Some Imperial Institute,
Rich in symbol, in ornament,
Which may speak to the centuries,
All the centuries after us,
Of this great Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

IX.

Fifty years of ever-broadening Com-
merce!
Fifty years of ever-brightening Science!
Fifty years of ever-widening Empire!

X.

You, the Mighty, the Fortunate,
You, the Lord-territorial,
You, the Lord-manufacturer,
You, the hardy, laborious,
Patient children of Albion,
You, Canadian, Indian,
Australasian, African,
All your hearts be in harmony,
All your voices in unison,
Singing 'Hail to the glorious
Golden year of her Jubilee!'

XI.

Are there thunders moaning in the dis-
tance?

Are there spectres moving in the darkness?
 Trust the Hand of Light will lead her people,
 Till the thunders pass, the spectres vanish,
 And the Light is Victor, and the darkness
 Dawns into the Jubilee of the Ages.

TO PROFESSOR JEBB,

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

FAIR things are slow to fade away,
 Bear witness you, that yesterday¹
 From out the Ghost of Pindar in
 you
 Roll'd an Olympian; and they say²

That here the torpid mummy wheat
 Of Egypt bore a grain as sweet
 As that which gilds the glebe of
 England,
 Sunn'd with a summer of milder heat.

So may this legend for awhile,
 If greeted by your classic smile,
 Tho' dead in its Trinacrian Enna,
 Blossom again on a colder isle.

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE.

(IN ENNA.)

FAINT as a climate-changing bird that
 flies
 All night across the darkness, and at
 dawn
 Falls on the threshold of her native land,
 And can no more, thou camest, O my
 child,
 Led upward by the God of ghosts and
 dreams,
 Who laid thee at Eleusis, dazed and
 dumb

¹ In Bologna.

² They say, for the fact is doubtful.

With passing thro' at once from state to
 state,
 Until I brought thee hither, that the
 day,
 When here thy hands let fall the gather'd
 flower,
 Might break thro' clouded memories
 once again
 On thy lost self. A sudden nightingale
 Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of
 song
 And welcome; and a gleam as of the
 moon,
 When first she peers along the tremulous
 deep,
 Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased
 away
 That shadow of a likeness to the king
 Of shadows, thy dark mate. Persephone!
 Queen of the dead no more—my child!
 Thine eyes
 Again were human-godlike, and the Sun
 Burst from a swimming fleece of winter
 gray,
 And robed thee in his day from head to
 feet—
 'Mother!' and I was folded in thine
 arms.

Child, those imperial, disimpassion'd
 eyes
 Awed even me at first, thy mother—eyes
 That oft had seen the serpent-wanded
 power
 Draw downward into Hades with his
 drift
 Of flickering spectres, lighted from below
 By the red race of fiery Phlegethon;
 But when before have Gods or men be-
 held
 The Life that had descended re-arise,
 And lighted from above him by the Sun?
 So mighty was the mother's childless cry,
 A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and
 Heaven!

So in this pleasant vale we stand again,
 The field of Enna, now once more ablaze
 With flowers that brighten as thy foot-
 step falls,

All flowers—but for one black blur of
earth
Left by that closing chasm, thro' which
the car
Of dark Aïdoneus rising rapt thee
hence.
And here, my child, tho' folded in thine
arms,
I feel the deathless heart of motherhood
Within me shudder, lest the naked glebe
Should yawn once more into the gulf,
and thence
The shrilly whinnings of the team of
Hell,
Ascending, pierce the glad and songful
air,
And all at once their arch'd necks, mid-
night-maned,
Jet upward thro' the mid-day blossom.
No!
For, see, thy foot has touch'd it; all the
space
Of blank earth-baldness clothes itself
afresh,
And breaks into the crocus-purple hour
That saw thee vanish.

Child, when thou wert gone,
I envied human wives, and nested birds,
Yea, the cubb'd lioness; went in search
of thee
Thro' many a palace, many a cot, and
gave
Thy breast to ailing infants in the night,
And set the mother waking in amaze
To find her sick one whole; and forth
again
Among the wail of midnight winds, and
cried,
'Where is my loved one? Wherefore
do ye wail?'
And out from all the night an answer
shrill'd,
'We know not, and we know not why we
wail.'
I climb'd on all the cliffs of all the seas,
And ask'd the waves that moan about
the world
'Where? do ye make your moaning for
my child?'

And round from all the world the voices
came
'We know not, and we know not why
we moan.'
'Where?' and I stared from every eagle
peak,
I thridded the black heart of all the
woods,
I peer'd thro' tomb and cave, and in the
storms
Of Autumn swept across the city, and
heard
The murmur of their temples chanting
me,
Me, me, the desolate Mother! 'Where'
—and turn'd,
And fled by many a waste, forlorn o
man,
And grieved for man thro' all my grie
for thee,—
The jungle rooted in his shatter'd hearth
The serpent coil'd about his broken shaft
The scorpion crawling over naked
skulls;—
I saw the tiger in the ruin'd fane
Spring from his fallen God, but trace o
thee
I saw not; and far on, and, following ou
A league of labyrinthine darkness, came
On three gray heads beneath a gleaming
rift.
'Where?' and I heard one voice from
all the three
'We know not, for we spin the lives o
men,
And not of Gods, and know not why w
spin!
There is a Fate beyond us.' Nothing
knew.

Last as the likeness of a dying man,
Without his knowledge, from him flits t
warn
A far-off friendship that he comes n
more,
So he, the God of dreams, who hear
my cry,
Drew from thyself the likeness of thyse
Without thy knowledge, and thy shado
past

Before me, crying 'The Bright one in
the highest
Is brother of the Dark one in the lowest,
And Bright and Dark have sworn that I,
the child
Of thee, the great Earth-Mother, thee,
the Power
That lifts her buried life from gloom to
bloom,
Should be for ever and for evermore
The Bride of Darkness.'

So the Shadow wail'd.
Then I, Earth-Goddess, cursed the Gods
of Heaven.
I would not mingle with their feasts; to
me
Their nectar smack'd of hemlock on the
lips,
Their rich ambrosia tasted aconite.
The man, that only lives and loves an
hour,
Seem'd nobler than their hard Eternities.
My quick tears kill'd the flower, my
ravings hush'd
The bird, and lost in utter grief I fail'd
To send my life thro' olive-yard and vine
And golden grain, my gift to helpless
man.
Rain-rotten died the wheat, the barley-
spears
Were hollow-husk'd, the leaf fell, and
the sun,
Pale at my grief, drew down before his
time
Sickening, and Ætna kept her winter
snow.

Then He, the brother of this Darkness,
He
Who still is highest, glancing from his
height
On earth a fruitless fallow, when he
miss'd
The wonted steam of sacrifice, the praise
And prayer of men, decreed that thou
should'st dwell
For nine white moons of each whole year
with me,
Three dark ones in the shadow with thy
King.

Once more the reaper in the gleam of
dawn
Will see me by the landmark far away,
Blessing his field, or seated in the dusk
Of even, by the lonely threshing-floor,
Rejoicing in the harvest and the grange.
Yet I, Earth-Goddess, am but ill-
content
With them, who still are highest. Those
gray heads,
What meant they by their 'Fate beyond
the Fates'
But younger kindlier Gods to bear us
down,
As we bore down the Gods before us?
Gods,
To quench, not hurl the thunderbolt, to
stay,
Not spread the plague, the famine; Gods
indeed,
To send the noon into the night and
break
The sunless halls of Hades into Heaven?
Till thy dark lord accept and love the Sun,
And all the Shadow die into the Light,
When thou shalt dwell the whole bright
year with me,
And souls of men, who grew beyond
their race,
And made themselves as Gods against
the fear
Of Death and Hell; and thou that hast
from men,
As Queen of Death, that worship which
is Fear,
Henceforth, as having risen from out the
dead,
Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
From buried grain thro' springing blade,
and bless
Their garner'd Autumn also, reap with me,
Earth-mother, in the harvest hymns of
Earth
The worship which is Love, and see no
more
The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-
glimmering lawns
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel.

OWD ROÄ.¹

NAÄV, noä mander² o' use to be callin'
'im Roä, Roä, Roä,

Fur the dog's stoän-deäf, an' e's blind, 'e
can naither stan' nor goä.

But I meäns fur to mäake 'is owd ääge
as 'appy as iver I can,

Fur I owäs owd Roäver moor nor I iver
owäd mottal man.

Thou's rode of 'is back when a babby,
afoor thou was gotten too owd,

Fur 'e'd fetch an' carry like owt, 'e was
allus as good as gowd.

Eh, but 'e'd fight wi' a will *when* 'e
fowt; 'e could howd³ 'is oan,

An' Roä was the dog as knaw'd when
an' where to bury his boane.

An' 'e kep his heäd hoop like a king, an'
'e'd niver not down wi' 'is taäl,

Fur 'e'd niver done nowt to be shaämed
on, when we was i' Howlaby
Daäle.

An' 'e sarved me sa well when 'e lived,
that, Dick, when 'e cooms to be
deäd,

I thinks as I'd like fur to hev soom soort
of a sarvice reäd.

Fur 'e's moor good sense na the Parlia-
ment man 'at stans fur us 'ere,

An' I'd voät fur 'im, my oän sen, if 'e
could but stan fur the Shere.

'Faäithful an' True'—them words be i'
Scriptur—an' Faäithful an' True

Ull be fun'⁴ upo' four short legs ten times
fur one upo' two.

An' maäybe they'll walk upo' two but I
knaws they runs upo' four,⁵—

Bedtime, Dicky! but waät till tha 'eärs
it be strikin' the hour.

Fur I wants to tell tha o' Roä when we
lived i' Howlaby Daäle,
Ten year sin—Naäy—naäy! tha mun
nobbut hev' one glass of aäle.

Straänge an' owd-farran'd¹ the 'ouse, an'
belt² long afoor my daäy

Wi' haäfe o' the chimleys a-twizzen'd³
an' twined like a band o' haäy.

The fellers as mäakes them picturs, 'ud
coom at the fall o' the year,

An' saddle their ends upo stools to pictur
the door-poorch theere,

An' the Heagle 'as hed two heäds stannin'
theere o' the brokken stick;⁴

An' they niver 'ed seed sich ivin'⁵ as
graw'd hall ower the brick;

An' there i' the 'ouse one night—but it's
down, an' all on it now

Goan into mangles an' tonups,⁶ an'
raäved slick thruf by the plow—

Theere, when the 'ouse wur a house, one
night I wur sittin' aloän,

Wi' Roäver athurt my fecät, an' sleeäpin
still as a stoän,

Of a Christmas Eäve, an' as cowd as
this, an' the midders⁷ as white,

An' the fences all on 'em bolster'd oop
wi' the windle⁸ that night;

An' the cat wur a-sleeäpin alongside
Roäver, but I wur awaäke,

An' smoäkin' an' thinkin' o' things—
Doänt mäake thysen sick wi' the
caäke.

Fur the men ater supper 'ed sung their
songs an' 'ed 'ed their beer,

An' 'ed goän their waäys; ther was
nobbut three, an' noän on 'em
theere.

¹ 'Owd-farran'd,' old-fashioned. ² Built.

³ 'Twizzen'd,' twisted. ⁴ On a staff *ragulä*.

⁵ Ivy. ⁶ Mangolds and turnips.

⁷ Meadows. ⁸ Drifted snow.

¹ Old Rover.

² Manner.

³ Hold.

⁴ Found.

⁵ 'Ou' as in 'house.'

They was all on 'em fear'd o' the Ghoäst
an' dussn't not sleeäp i' the 'ouse,
But Dicky, the Ghoäst moästlins¹ was
nobbut a rat or a mouse.

An' I looökt out wonst² at the night,
an' the daäle was all of a thaw,
Fur I seed the beck coomin' down like
a long black snaäke i' the snaw,

An' I heärd greät heäps o' the snaw
slushin' down fro' the bank to
the beck,

An' then as I stood i' the doorwaäy, I
feeäld it drip o' my neck.

Saw I turn'd in ageän, an' I thowt o'
the good owd times 'at was goan,
An' the munney they maäde by the war,
an' the times 'at was coomin' on ;

Fur I thowt if the Staäte was a gawin'
to let in furriners' wheät,
Howiver was British farmers to stan'
ageän o' their feeät.

Howiver was I fur to find my rent an'
to paäy my men ?
An' all along o' the feller³ as turn'd 'is
back of hissen.

Thou slep i' the chaumber above us, we
couldn't ha' 'eärd tha call,
Sa Moother 'ed tell'd ma to bring tha
down, an' thy craädle an' all ;

Fur the gell o' the farm 'at slep wi' tha
then 'ed gotten wer leäve,
Fur to goä that night to 'er foälk by cause
o' the Christmas Eäve ;

But 'I cleän forgot tha, my lad, when
Moother 'ed gotten to bed,
An' I slep i' my chair hup-on-end, an' the
Freeä Traäde runn'd 'i my 'ead,

Till I dreäm'd 'at Squire walkt in, an' I
says to him 'Squire, ya're lääte,'
Then I seed at 'is faäce wur as red as the
Yule-block theer i' the graäte.

An' 'e says 'can ya paäy me the rent to-
night?' an' I says to 'im 'Noä,'
An' 'e cotch'd howd hard o' my hairm,¹
'Then hout to-night tha shall goä.'

'Tha'll niver,' says I, 'be a-turnin ma
hout upo' Christmas Eäve ?'
Then I waäked an' I fun it was Roäver
a-tuggin' an' teärin' my slieäve.

An' I thowt as 'e'd goän cleän-wud,² fur
I noäwaäys know'd 'is intent ;
An' I says 'Git awaäy, ya beäst,' an' I
fetcht 'im a kick an' 'e went.

Then 'e tummled up stairs, fur I 'eärd
'im, as if 'e'd 'a brokken 'is neck,
An' I'd cleär forgot, little Dicky, thy
chaumber door wouldn't sneck ;³

An' I slep' i' my chair ageän wi' my hairm
hingin' down to the floor,
An' I thowt it was Roäver a-tuggin' an'
teärin' me wuss nor afor,

An' I thowt 'at I kick'd 'im ageän, but I
kick'd thy Moother istead.
'What arta snorin' theere fur? the house
is afire,' she said.

Thy Moother 'ed beän a-naggin' about
the gell o' the farm,
She offens 'ud spy summut wrong when
there warn't not a mossel o' harm ;

An' she didn't not solidly meän I wur
gawin' that waäy to the bad,
Fur the gell⁴ was as howry a trollopie
as iver traäpes'd i' the squad.

But Moother was free of 'er tongue, as I
offens 'ev tell'd 'er mysen,
Sa I kep i' my chair, fur I thowt she
was nobbut a-rilin' ma then.

An' I says 'I'd be good to tha, Bess, if
tha'd onywaäys let ma be good,'

¹ Arm.

² Mad.

³ Latch.

⁴ The girl was as dirty a slut as ever trudged
in the mud, but there is a sense of slatternliness
in 'traäpes'd' which is not expressed in 'trudged.'

¹ 'Moästlins,' for the most part, generally.

² Once.

³ Peel.

But she skelpt ma haäfe ower i' the chair,
an' screeäd like a Howl gone
wud ¹—

'Ya mun run fur the lether.² Git oop,
if ya're onywaäys good for owt.'
And I says 'If I beänt noäwaäys—not
nowadaäys—good fur nowt—

Yit I beänt sich a Nowt³ of all Nowts
as 'ull hallus do as 'e's bid.'

'But the stairs is afire,' she said; then I
seed 'er a-cryin', I did.

An' she beäld 'Ya mun saäve little Dick,
an' be sharp about it an' all,'

Sa I runs to the yard fur a lether, an'
sets 'im ageän the wall,

An' I claums an' I mashes the winder
hin, when I gits to the top,
But the heät druv hout i' my heyes till I
feäld mysen ready to drop.

Thy Moother was howdin' the lether, an'
tellin' me not to be skeärd,
An' I wasn't afeärd, or I thinks leäst-
waäys as I wasn't afeärd;

But I couldn't see fur the smoäke where
thou was a-liggin, my lad,
An' Roäver was there i' the chaumber
a-yowlin' an' yaupin' like mad;

An' thou was a-beälin' likewise, an' a-
squeälin', as if tha was bit,
An' it wasn't a bite but a burn, fur the
merk's⁴ o' thy shou'der yit;

Then I call'd out Roä, Roä, Roä, thaw
I didn't haäfe think as 'e'd 'ear,
*But 'e coom'd thruf the fire wi' my bairn
i' 'is mouth to the winder there!*

He coom'd like a Hangel o' marcy as
soon as 'e 'eärd 'is naäme,
Or like tother Hangel i' Scriptur 'at
summun seed i' the flaäme,

¹ She half overturned me and shrieked like an owl gone mad.

² Ladder.

³ A thoroughly insignificant or worthless person.

⁴ Mark.

When summun 'ed hax'd fur a son, an'
'e promised a son to she,
An' Roä was as good as the Hangel i'
saävin' a son fur me.

Sa I browt tha down, an' I says 'I mun
gaw up ageän fur Roä.'

'Gaw up ageän fur the varmint?' I
tell'd 'er 'Yeäs I mun goä.'

An' I claumb'd up ageän to the winder,
an' clemm'd¹ owd Roä by the 'eäd

An' 'is 'air coom'd off i' my 'ands an'
taäked 'im at fust fur deäd;

Fur 'e smell'd like a herse a-singein', an'
seeäm'd as blind as a poop,
An' haäfe on 'im bare as a bublin'.² I
couldn't wakken 'im oop,

But I browt 'im down, an' we got to the
barn, fur the barn wouldn't burn
Wi' the wind blawin' hard tother waäy,
an' the wind wasn't like to turn.

An' I kep a-callin' o' Roä till 'e waggled
'is taäil fur a bit,
But the cocks kep a-crawin' an' crawin'
all night, an' I 'ears 'em yit;

An' the dogs was a-yowlin' all round, and
thou was a-squeälin' thysen,
An' Moother was naggin' an' groänin' an'
moänin' an' naggin' ageän;

An' I 'eärd the bricks an' the baulks
rummle down when the roof gev
waäy,

Fur the fire was a-raägin' an' raävin' an'
roarin' like judgment daäy.

Warm enew theree sewer-ly, but the barn
was as cowl as owt,

An' we cuddled and huddled together, an'
happt⁴ wersens oop as we mowt.

An' I browt Roä round, but Moother 'e
beän sa soäk'd wi' the thaw
'At she cõtch'd 'er death o' cowl tha
night, poor soul, i' the straw.

¹ Clutched.

² 'Bubbling,' a young unfledged bird.

³ Beams.

⁴ Wrapt ourselves.

Haäfe o' the parish runn'd oop when the
 rigtree¹ was tummlin' in—
 Too laäte—but it's all ower now—hall
 hower—an' ten year sin ;

Too laäte, tha mun git tha to bed, but
 I'll coom an' I'll squench the light,
 Fur we moänt 'ev naw moor fires—and
 soa little Dick, good-night.

¹ The beam that runs along the roof of the
 house just beneath the ridge.

VASTNESS.

I.

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe
 sighs after many a vanish'd face,
 Many a planet by many a sun may roll
 with the dust of a vanish'd race.

II.

Raving politics, never at rest—as this
 poor earth's pale history runs,—
 What is it all but a trouble of ants in the
 gleam of a million million of suns ?

III.

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side,
 truthless violence mourn'd by the
 Wise,
 Thousands of voices drowning his own in
 a popular torrent of lies upon lies ;

IV.

Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious
 annals of army and fleet,
 Death for the right cause, death for the
 wrong cause, trumpets of victory,
 groans of defeat ;

V.

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk,
 and Charity setting the martyr
 aflame ;
 Thralldom who walks with the banner of
 Freedom, and recks not to ruin a
 realm in her name .

VI.

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the
 gloom of doubts that darken the
 schools ;
 Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her
 hand, follow'd up by her vassal
 legion of fools ;

VII.

Trade flying over a thousand seas with
 her spice and her vintage, her silk
 and her corn ;
 Desolate offing, sailorless harbours,
 famishing populace, wharves for-
 lorn ;

VIII.

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise ;
 gloom of the evening, Life at a
 close ;
 Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-
 way with her flying robe and her
 poison'd rose ;

IX.

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of
 Pleasure, a worm which writhes
 all day, and at night .
 Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper,
 and stings him back to the curse
 of the light ;

X.

Wealth with his wines and his wedded
 harlots ; honest Poverty, bare to
 the bone ;
 Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty ;
 Flattery gilding the rift in a
 throne ;

XI.

Fame blowing out from her golden
 trumpet a jubilant challenge to
 Time and to Fate ;
 Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on
 all the laurel'd graves of the Great ;

XII.

Love for the maiden, crown'd with
marriage, no regrets for aught
that has been,

Household happiness, gracious children,
debtless competence, golden mean;

XIII.

National hatreds of whole generations,
and pigmy spites of the village
spire;

Vows that will last to the last death-
ruckle, and vows that are snapt
in a moment of fire;

XIV.

He that has lived for the lust of the
minute, and died in the doing it,
flesh without mind;

He that has nail'd all flesh to the Cross,
till Self died out in the love of
his kind;

XV.

Spring and Summer and Autumn and
Winter, and all these old revolu-
tions of earth;

All new-old revolutions of Empire—
change of the tide—what is all of
it worth?

XVI.

What the philosophies, all the sciences,
poesy, varying voices of prayer?

All that is noblest, all that is basest, all
that is filthy with all that is fair?

XVII.

What is it all, if we all of us end but in
being our own corpse-coffins at
last,

Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence,
drown'd in the deeps of a mean-
ingless Past?

XVIII.

What but a murmur of gnats in the
gloom, or a moment's anger of
bees in their hive?—

* * * *

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and
love him for ever: the dead are
not dead but alive.

Dedicated to the Hon. J. Russell
Lowell.

THE RING.

MIRIAM AND HER FATHER.

Miriam (singing).

MELLOW moon of heaven,
Bright in blue,
Moon of married hearts,
Hear me, you!

Twelve times in the year
Bring me bliss,
Globing Honey Moons
Bright as this.

Moon, you fade at times
From the night.
Young again you grow
Out of sight.

Silver crescent-curve,
Coming soon,
Globe again, and make
Honey Moon.

Shall not *my* love last,
Moon, with you,
For ten thousand years
Old and new?

Father. And who was he with such
loye-drunken eyes
They made a thousand honey moons of
one?

Miriam. The prophet of his own, my
Hubert—his
The words, and mine the setting. 'Air
and Words,'
Said Hubert, when I sang the song, 'are
bride
And bridegroom.' Does it please you?

Father. Mainly, child,
Because I hear your Mother's voice in
yours.

She——, why, you shiver tho' the wind
is west

With all the warmth of summer.

Miriam. Well, I felt
On a sudden I know not what, a breath
that past

With all the cold of winter.

Father (muttering to himself). Even
so.

The Ghost in Man, the Ghost that once
was Man,

But cannot wholly free itself from Man,
Are calling to each other thro' a dawn
Stranger than earth has ever seen; the
veil

Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.
No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for
man,

But thro' the Will of One who knows
and rules—

And utter knowledge is but utter love—
Æonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres—an ever opening
height,

An ever lessening earth—and she perhaps,
My Miriam, breaks her latest earthly link
With me to-day.

Miriam. You speak so low, what is it?
Your 'Miriam breaks'—is making a new
link

Breaking an old one?

Father. No, for we, my child,
Have been till now each other's all-in-all.

Miriam. And you the lifelong guard-
ian of the child.

Father. I, and one other whom you
have not known.

Miriam. And who? what other?

Father. Whither are you bound?
For Naples which we only left in May?

Miriam. No! father, Spain, but
Hubert brings me home

With April and the swallow. Wish me
joy!

Father. What need to wish when
Hubert weds in you

The heart of Love, and you the soul of
Truth
In Hubert?

Miriam. Tho' you used to call me
once

The lonely maiden-Princess of the wood,
Who meant to sleep her hundred sum-
mers out

Before a kiss should wake her.

Father. Ay, but now
Your fairy Prince has found you, take
this ring.

Miriam. 'Io t'amo'—and these dia-
monds—beautiful!

'From Walter,' and for me from you then?

Father. Well,
One way for Miriam.

Miriam. Miriam am I not?

Father. This ring bequeath'd you by
your mother, child,

Was to be given you—such her dying
wish—

Given on the morning when you came of
age

Or on the day you married. Both the
days

Now close in one. The ring is doubly
yours.

Why do you look so gravely at the tower?

Miriam. I never saw it yet so all
ablaze

With creepers crimsoning to the pinnacles,
As if perpetual sunset linger'd there,
And all ablaze too in the lake below!

And how the birds that circle round the
tower

Are cheeping to each other of their flight
To summer lands!

Father. And that has made you grave?
Fly—care not. Birds and brides must
leave the nest.

Child, I am happier in your happiness
Than in mine own.

Miriam. It is not that!

Father. What else?

Miriam. That chamber in the tower.

Father. What chamber, child?
Your nurse is here?

Miriam. My Mother's nurse and mine.
She comes to dress me in my bridal veil.

Father. What did she say?

Miriam. She said, that you and I
Had been abroad for my poor health so
long

She fear'd I had forgotten her, and I
ask'd

About my Mother, and she said, 'Thy
hair

Is golden like thy Mother's, not so fine.'

Father. What then? what more?

Miriam. She said—perhaps indeed
She wander'd, having wander'd now so
far

Beyond the common date of death—that
you,

When I was smaller than the statuette
Of my dear Mother on your bracket here—
You took me to that chamber in the tower,
The topmost—a chest there, by which
you knelt—

And there were books and dresses—left
to me,

A ring too which you kiss'd, and I, she
said,

I babbled, Mother, Mother—as I used
To prattle to her picture—stretch'd my
hands

As if I saw her; then a woman came
And caught me from my nurse. I hear
her yet—

A sound of anger like a distant storm.

Father. Garrulous old crone.

Miriam. Poor nurse!

Father. I bad her keep,
Like a seal'd book, all mention of the
ring,

For I myself would tell you all to-day.

Miriam. 'She too might speak to-
day,' she mumbled. Still,

I scarce have learnt the title of your book,
But you will turn the pages.

Father. Ay, to-day!

I brought you to that chamber on your
third

September birthday with your nurse, and
felt

An icy breath play on me, while I stoopt
To take and kiss the ring.

Miriam. This very ring
To t'amo?

Father. Yes, for some wild hope
was mine

That, in the misery of my married life,
Miriam your Mother might appear to me.
She came to you, not me. The storm,
you hear

Far-off, is Muriel—your stepmother's
voice.

Miriam. Vext, that you thought my
Mother came to me?

Or at my crying 'Mother?' or to find
My Mother's diamonds hidden from her
there,

Like worldly beauties in the Cell, not
shown

To dazzle all that see them?

Father. Wait a while.

Your Mother and step-mother—Miriam
Erne

And Muriel Erne—the two were cousins
—lived

With Muriel's mother on the down, that
sees

A thousand squares of corn and meadow,
far

As the gray deep, a landscape which
your eyes

Have many a time ranged over when a
babe.

Miriam. I climb'd the hill with

Hubert yesterday,

And from the thousand squares, one
silent voice

Came on the wind, and seem'd to say
'Again.'

We saw far off an old forsaken house,
Then home, and past the ruin'd mill.

Father. And there

I found these cousins often by the brook,
For Miriam sketch'd and Muriel threw
the fly;

The girls of equal age, but one was fair,
And one was dark, and both were beauti-
ful.

No voice for either spoke within my heart
Then, for the surface eye, that only doats
On outward beauty, glancing from the one
To the other, knew not that which
pleased it most,

The raven ringlet or the gold; but both

Were dowerless, and myself, I used to
 walk
 This Terrace—morbid, melancholy; mine
 And yet not mine the hall, the farm, the
 field;
 For all that ample woodland whisper'd
 'debt,'
 The brook that feeds this lakelet mur-
 mur'd 'debt,'
 And in yon arching avenue of old elms,
 Tho' mine, not mine, I heard the sober
 rook
 And carrion crow cry 'Mortgage.'
Miriam. Father's fault
 Visited on the children!
Father. Ay, but then
 A kinsman, dying, summon'd me to
 Rome—
 He left me wealth—and while I journey'd
 hence,
 And saw the world fly by me like a dream,
 And while I communed with my truest
 self,
 I woke to all of truest in myself,
 Till, in the gleam of those mid-summer
 dawns,
 The form of Muriel faded, and the face
 Of Miriam grew upon me, till I knew;
 And past and future mix'd in Heaven
 and made
 The rosy twilight of a perfect day.
Miriam. So glad? no tear for him,
 who left you wealth,
 Your kinsman?
Father. I had seen the man but once;
 He loved my name not me; and then I
 pass'd
 Home, and thro' Venice, where a jeweller,
 So far gone down, or so far up in life,
 That he was nearing his own hundred,
 sold
 This ring to me, then laugh'd 'the ring
 is weird.'
 And weird and worn and wizard-like was
 he.
 'Why weird?' I ask'd him; and he said
 'The souls
 Of two repentant Lovers guard the ring;'
 Then with a ribald twinkle in his bleak
 eyes—

'And if you give the ring to any maid,
 They still remember what it cost them
 here,
 And bind the maid to love you by the
 ring;
 And if the ring were stolen from the
 maid,
 The theft were death or madness to the
 thief,
 So sacred those Ghost Lovers hold the
 gift.'
 And then he told their legend:
 'Long ago
 Two lovers parted by a scurrilous tale
 Had quarrell'd, till the man repenting
 sent
 This ring "Io t'amo" to his best beloved,
 And sent it on her birthday. She in
 wrath
 Return'd it on her birthday, and that day
 His death-day, when, half-frenzied by the
 ring,
 He wildly fought a rival suitor, him
 The causer of that scandal, fought and
 fell;
 And she that came to part them all too
 late,
 And found a corpse and silence, drew the
 ring
 From his dead finger, wore it till her
 death,
 Shrined him within the temple of her
 heart,
 Made every moment of her after life
 A virgin victim to his memory,
 And dying rose, and rear'd her arms, and
 cried
 "I see him, Io t'amo, Io t'amo."
Miriam. Legend or true? so tender
 should be true!
 Did he believe it? did you ask him?
Father. Ay!
 But that half skeleton, like a barren
 ghost
 From out the fleshless world of spirits,
 laugh'd:
 A hollow laughter!
Miriam. Vile, so near the ghost
 Himself, to laugh at love in death! But
 you?

Father. Well, as the bygone lover
thro' this ring
Had sent his cry for her forgiveness, I
Would call thro' this 'Io t'amo' to the
heart
Of Miriam; then I had the man en-
grave
'From Walter' on the ring, and send it
—wrote
Name, surname, all as clear as noon, but
he—
Some younger hand must have engraven
the ring—
His fingers were so stiffen'd by the frost
Of seven and ninety winters, that he
scrawl'd
A 'Miriam' that might seem a 'Muriel';
And Muriel claim'd and open'd what I
meant
For Miriam, took the ring, and flaunted
it
Before that other whom I loved and love.
A mountain stay'd me here, a minster
there,
A galleried palace, or a battlefield,
Where stood the sheaf of Peace: but—
coming home—
And on your Mother's birthday—all but
yours—
A week betwixt—and when the tower as
now
Was all ablaze with crimson to the roof,
And all ablaze too plunging in the lake
Head-foremost—who were those that
stood between
The tower and that rich phantom of the
tower?
Muriel and Miriam, each in white, and
like
May-blossoms in mid autumn—was it
they?
A light shot upward on them from the
lake.
What sparkled there? whose hand was
that? they stood
So close together. I am not keen of
sight,
But coming nearer—Muriel had the ring—
'O Miriam! have you given your ring to
her?

O Miriam! Miriam reddened, Muriel
clench'd
The hand that wore it, till I cried again:
'O Miriam, if you love me take the ring!'
She glanced at me, at Muriel, and was
mute.
'Nay, if you cannot love me, let it be.'
Then—Muriel standing ever statue-like—
She turn'd, and in her soft imperial way
And saying gently: 'Muriel, by your
leave,'
Unclosed the hand, and from it drew the
ring,
And gave it me, who pass'd it down her
own,
'Io t'amo, all is well then.' Muriel fled.
Miriam. Poor Muriel!
Father. Ay, poor Muriel
when you hear
What follows! Miriam loved me from
the first,
Not thro' the ring; but on her marriage-
morn
This birthday, death-day, and betrothal
ring,
Laid on her table overnight, was gone;
And after hours of search and doubt and
threats,
And hubbub, Muriel enter'd with it,
'See!—
Found in a chink of that old moulder'd
floor!'
My Miriam nodded with a pitying smile,
As who should say 'that those who lose
can find.'
Then I and she were married for a
year,
One year without a storm, or even a
cloud;
And you my Miriam born within the
year;
And she my Miriam dead within the
year.
I sat beside her dying, and she gaspt:
'The books, the miniature, the lace are
hers,
My ring too when she comes of age, or
when
She marries; you—you loved me, kept
your word.

You love me still "Io t'amo."—Muriel
—no—

She cannot love; she loves her own
hard self,

Her firm will, her fix'd purpose. Pro-
mise me,

Miriam not Muriel—she shall have the
ring.'

And there the light of other life, which
lives

Beyond our burial and our buried eyes,
Gleam'd for a moment in her own on
earth.

I swore the vow, then with my latest
kiss

Upon them, closed her eyes, which would
not close,

But kept their watch upon the ring and
you.

Your birthday was her death-day.

Miriam. O poor Mother!

And you, poor desolate Father, and
poor me,

The little senseless, worthless, wordless
babe,

Saved when your life was wreck'd!

Father. Desolate? yes!

Desolate as that sailor, whom the storm
Had parted from his comrade in the
boat,

And dash'd half dead on barren sands,
was I.

Nay, you were my one solace; only—
you

Were always ailing. Muriel's mother
sent,

And sure am I, by Muriel, one day came
And saw you, shook her head, and patted
yours,

And smiled, and making with a kindly
pinch

Each poor pale cheek a momentary rose—
'That should be fix'd,' she said; 'your
pretty bud,

So blighted here, would flower into full
health

Among our heath and bracken. Let her
come!

And we will feed her with our mountain
air,

And send her home to you rejoicing.'
No—

We could not part. And once, when
you my girl

Rode on my shoulder home—the tiny fist
Had graspt a daisy from your Mother's
grave—

By the lych-gate was Muriel. 'Ay,' she
said,

'Among the tombs in this damp vale of
yours!

You scorn my Mother's warning, but the
child

Is paler than before. We often walk
In open sun, and see beneath our feet
The mist of autumn gather from your
lake,

And shroud the tower; and once we
only saw

Your gilded vane, a light above the
mist'—

(Our old bright bird that still is veering
there

Above his four gold letters) 'and the
light,'

She said, 'was like that light'—and there
she paused,

And long; till I believing that the girl's
Lean fancy, groping for it, could not find
One likeness, laugh'd a little and found
her two—

'A warrior's crest above the cloud of
war'—

'A fiery phoenix rising from the smoke,
The pyre he burnt in.'—'Nay,' she said,
'the light

That glimmers on the marsh and on the
grave.'

And spoke no more, but turn'd and
pass'd away.

Miriam, I am not surely one of those
Caught by the flower that closes on the
fly,

But after ten slow weeks her fix'd intent,
In aiming at an all but hopeless mark
To strike it, struck; I took, I left you
there;

I came, I went, was happier day by day;
For Muriel nursed you with a mother's
care;

Till on that clear and heather-scented
height
The rounder cheek had brighten'd into
bloom.
She always came to meet me carrying
you,
And all her talk was of the babe she
loved ;
So, following her old pastime of the brook,
She threw the fly for me ; but oftener left
That angling to the mother. 'Muriel's
health
Had weaken'd, nursing little Miriam.
Strange !
She used to shun the wailing babe, and
doats
On this of yours.' But when the matron
saw
That hinted love was only wasted bait,
Not risen to, she was bolder. 'Ever
since
You sent the fatal ring'—I told her 'sent
To Miriam,' 'Doubtless—ay, but ever
since
In all the world my dear one sees but
you—
In your sweet babe she finds but you—
she makes
Her heart a mirror that reflects but you.'
And then the tear fell, the voice broke.
Her heart !
I gazed into the mirror, as a man
Who sees his face in water, and a stone,
That glances from the bottom of the
pool,
Strike upward thro' the shadow ; yet at
last,
Gratitude—loneliness—desire to keep
So skilled a nurse about you always—
nay !
Some half remorseful kind of pity too—
Well ! well, you know I married Muriel
Erne.
'I take thee Muriel for my wedded
wife'—
I had forgotten it was your birthday,
child—
When all at once with some electric thrill
A cold air pass'd between us, and the
hands

Fell from each other, and were join'd
again.
No second cloudless honeymoon was
mine.
For by and by she sicken'd of the farce,
She dropt the gracious mask of mother-
hood,
She came no more to meet me, carrying
you,
Nor ever cared to set you on her knee,
Nor ever let you gambol in her sight,
Nor ever cheer'd you with a kindly smile,
Nor ever ceased to clamour for the ring ;
Why had I sent the ring at first to her ?
Why had I made her love me thro' the
ring,
And then had changed ? so fickle are
men—the best !
Not she—but now my love was hers
again,
The ring by right, she said, was hers
again.
At times too shrilling in her angrier
moods,
'That weak and watery nature love you ?
No !
'*Io t'amo, Io t'amo*' !' flung herself
Against my heart, but often while her
lips
Were warm upon my cheek, an icy breath,
As from the grating of a sepulchre,
Past over both. I told her of my vow,
No pliable idiot I to break my vow ;
But still she made her outcry for the ring ;
For one monotonous fancy madden'd
her,
Till I myself was madden'd with her cry,
And even that '*Io t'amo*,' those three
sweet
Italian words, became a weariness.
My people too were scared with eerie
sounds,
A footstep, a low throbbing in the walls,
A noise of falling weights that never fell,
Weird whispers, bells that rang without
a hand,
Door-handles turn'd when none was at
the door,
And bolted doors that open'd of them-
selves :

And one betwixt the dark and light had
seen

Her, bending by the cradle of her babe.

Miriam. And I remember once that
being waked

By noises in the house—and no one near—
I cried for nurse, and felt a gentle hand
Fall on my forehead, and a sudden face
Look'd in upon me like a gleam and
pass'd,

And I was quieted, and slept again.

Or is it some half memory of a dream?

Father. Your fifth September birth-
day.

Miriam. And the face,

The hand,—my Mother.

Father. Miriam, on that day
Two lovers parted by no scurrilous tale—
Mere want of gold—and still for twenty
years

Bound by the golden cord of their first
love—

Had ask'd us to their marriage, and to
share

Their marriage-banquet. Muriel, paler
then

Than ever you were in your cradle,
moan'd,

‘I am fitter for my bed, or for my grave,
I cannot go, go you.’ And then she rose,
She clung to me with such a hard embrace,
So lingeringly long, that half-amazed
I parted from her, and I went alone.

And when the bridegroom murmur'd,
‘With this ring,’

I felt for what I could not find, the key,
The guardian of her relics, of *her* ring.
I kept it as a sacred amulet

About me,—gone! and gone in that
embrace!

Then, hurrying home, I found her not
in house

Or garden—up the tower—an icy air
Fled by me.—There, the chest was open
—all

The sacred relics tost about the floor—
Among them Muriel lying on her face—
I raised her, call'd her ‘Muriel, Muriel
wake!’

The fatal ring lay near her; the glazed eye

Glared at me as in horror. Dead! I
took

And chafed the freezing hand. A red
mark ran

All round one finger pointed straight,
the rest

Were crumpled inwards. Dead!—and
maybe stung

With some remorse, had stolen, worn the
ring—

Then torn it from her finger, or as if—
For never had I seen her show remorse—

As if—

Miriam. —those two Ghost lovers—

Father. Lovers yet—

Miriam. Yes, yes!

Father. —but dead so long, gone up
so far,

That now their ever-rising life has dwarf'd
Or lost the moment of their past on earth,
As we forget our wail at being born.

As if—

Miriam. a dearer ghost had—

Father. —wrench'd it away.

Miriam. Had floated in with sad
reproachful eyes,

Till from her own hand she had torn the
ring

In fright, and fallen dead. And I myself
Am half afraid to wear it.

Father. Well, no more!

No bridal music this! but fear not you!
You have the ring she guarded; that
poor link

With earth is broken, and has left her
free,

Except that, still drawn downward for
an hour,

Her spirit hovering by the church, where
she

Was married too, may linger, till she
sees

Her maiden coming like a Queen, who
leaves

Some colder province in the North to
gain

Her capital city, where the loyal bells
Clash welcome—linger, till her own, the
babe

She lean'd to from her Spiritual sphere,

Her lonely maiden-Princess, crown'd
with flowers,
Has enter'd on the larger woman-world
Of wives and mothers.

But the bridal veil—
Your nurse is waiting. Kiss me child
and go.

FORLORN.

I.

'HE is fled—I wish him dead—
He that wrought my ruin—
O the flattery and the craft
Which were my undoing . . .
In the night, in the night,
When the storms are blowing.

II.

'Who was witness of the crime?
Who shall now reveal it?
He is fled, or he is dead,
Marriage will conceal it . . .
In the night, in the night,
While the gloom is growing.'

III.

Catherine, Catherine, in the night,
What is this you're dreaming?
There is laughter down in Hell
At your simple scheming . . .
In the night, in the night,
When the ghosts are fleeting.

IV.

You to place a hand in his
Like an honest woman's,
You that lie with wasted lungs
Waiting for your summons . . .
In the night, O the night!
O the deathwatch beating!

V.

There will come a witness soon
Hard to be confuted,
All the world will hear a voice
Scream you are polluted . . .
In the night! O the night,
When the owls are wailing!

VI.

Shame and marriage, Shame and
marriage,
Fright and foul dissembling,
Bantering bridesman, reddening priest,
Tower and altar trembling . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the mind is failing!

VII.

Mother, dare you kill your child?
How your hand is shaking!
Daughter of the seed of Cain,
What is this you're taking? . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the house is sleeping.

VIII.

Dreadful! has it come to this,
O unhappy creature?
You that would not tread on a worm
For your gentle nature . . .
In the night, O the night,
O the night of weeping!

IX.

Murder would not veil your sin,
Marriage will not hide it,
Earth and Hell will brand your name,
Wretch you must abide it . . .
In the night, O the night,
Long before the dawning.

X.

Up, get up, and tell him all,
Tell him you were lying!
Do not die with a lie in your mouth,
You that know you're dying . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the grave is yawning.

XI.

No—you will not die before,
Tho' you'll ne'er be stronger;
You will live till *that* is born,
Then a little longer . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the Fiend is prowling.

XII.

Death and marriage, Death and marriage !

Funeral hearses rolling !
Black with bridal favours mixt !
Bridal bells with tolling ! . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the wolves are howling.

XIII.

Up, get up, the time is short,
Tell him now or never !
Tell him all before you die,
Lest you die for ever . . .
In the night, O the night,
Where there's no forgetting.

XIV.

Up she got, and wrote him all,
All her tale of sadness,
Blister'd every word with tears,
And eased her heart of madness . . .
In the night, and nigh the dawn,
And while the moon was setting.

HAPPY.

THE LEPER'S BRIDE.

I.

WHY wail you, pretty plover? and what
is it that you fear?
Is he sick your mate like mine? have
you lost him, is he fled?
And there—the heron rises from his
watch beside the mere,
And flies above the leper's hut, where
lives the living-dead.

II.

Come back, nor let me know it! would
he live and die alone?
And has he not forgiven me yet, his
over-jealous bride,
Who am, and was, and will be his, his
own and only own,
To share his living death with him,
die with him side by side?

III.

Is that the leper's hut on the solitary
moor,
Where noble Ulric dwells forlorn, and
wears the leper's weed?
The door is open. He! is he standing
at the door,
My soldier of the Cross? it is he and
he indeed !

IV.

My roses—will he take them *now*—mine,
his—from off the tree
We planted both together, happy in
our marriage morn?
O God, I could blaspheme, for he fought
Thy fight for Thee,
And Thou hast made him leper to
compass him with scorn—

V.

Hast spared the flesh of thousands, the
coward and the base,
And set a crueller mark than Cain's
on him, the good and brave!
He sees me, waves me from him. I will
front him face to face.
You need not wave me from you. I
would leap into your grave.
* * * *

VI.

My warrior of the Holy Cross and of the
conquering sword,
The roses that you cast aside—once
more I bring you these.
No nearer? do you scorn me when you
tell me, O my lord,
You would not mar the beauty of your
bride with your disease.

VII.

You say your body is so foul—then here
I stand apart,
Who yearn to lay my loving head upon
your leprous breast.
The leper plague may scale my skin but
never taint my heart;
Your body is not foul to me, and body
is foul at best.

VIII.

I loved you first when young and fair,
 but now I love you most;
 The fairest flesh at last is filth on which
 the worm will feast;
 This poor rib-grated dungeon of the holy
 human ghost,
 This house with all its hateful needs no
 cleaner than the beast,

IX.

This coarse diseaseful creature which in
 Eden was divine,
 This Satan-haunted ruin, this little
 city of sewers,
 This wall of solid flesh that comes between
 your soul and mine,
 Will vanish and give place to the
 beauty that endures,

X.

The beauty that endures on the Spiritual
 height,
 When we shall stand transfigured, like
 Christ on Hermon hill,
 And moving each to music, soul in soul
 and light in light,
 Shall flash thro' one another in a
 moment as we will.

XI.

Foul! foul! the word was yours not
 mine, I worship that right hand
 Which fell'd the foes before you as the
 woodman fells the wood,
 And sway'd the sword that lighten'd back
 the sun of Holy land,
 And clove the Moslem crescent moon,
 and changed it into blood.

XII.

And once I worshipt all too well this
 creature of decay,
 For Age will chink the face, and Death
 will freeze the supplest limbs—
 Yet you in your mid manhood—O the
 grief when yesterday
 They bore the Cross before you to the
 chant of funeral hymns.

XIII.

'Libera me, Domine!' you sang the
 Psalm, and when
 The Priest pronounced you dead, and
 flung the mould upon your feet,
 A beauty came upon your face, not that
 of living men,
 But seen upon the silent brow when
 life has ceased to beat.

XIV.

'Libera nos, Domine'—you knew not
 one was there
 Who saw you kneel beside your bier,
 and weeping scarce could see;
 May I come a little nearer, I that heard,
 and changed the prayer
 And sang the married 'nos' for the
 solitary 'me.'

XV.

My beauty marred by you? by you! so
 be it. All is well
 If I lose it and myself in the higher
 beauty, yours.
My beauty lured that falcon from his
 eyry on the fell,
 Who never caught one gleam of the
 beauty which endures—

XVI.

The Count who sought to snap the bond
 that link'd us life to life,
 Who whisper'd me 'your Ulric loves'
 —a little nearer still—
 He hiss'd, 'Let us revenge ourselves,
 your Ulric woos my wife'—
 A lie by which he thought he could
 subdue me to his will.

XVII.

I knew that you were near me when I
 let him kiss my brow;
 Did he touch me on the lips? I was
 jealous, anger'd, vain,
 And I meant to make *you* jealous. Are
 you jealous of me now?
 Your pardon, O my love, if I ever gave
 you pain.

XVIII.

You never once accused me, but I wept
 alone, and sigh'd
 In the winter of the Present for the
 summer of the Past;
 That icy winter silence—how it froze you
 from your bride,
 Tho' I made one barren effort to break
 it at the last.

XIX.

I brought you, you remember, these roses,
 when I knew
 You were parting for the war, and you
 took them tho' you frown'd;
 You frown'd and yet you kiss'd them.
 All at once the trumpet blew,
 And you spurr'd your fiery horse, and
 you hurl'd them to the ground.

XX.

You parted for the Holy War without a
 word to me,
 And clear myself unask'd—not I. My
 nature was too proud.
 And him I saw but once again, and far
 away was he,
 When I was praying in a storm—the
 crash was long and loud—

XXI.

That God would ever slant His bolt from
 falling on your head—
 Then I lifted up my eyes, he was coming
 down the fell—
 I clapt my hands. The sudden fire from
 Heaven had dash'd him dead,
 And sent him charr'd and blasted to
 the deathless fire of Hell.

XXII.

See, I sinn'd but for a moment. I re-
 pent and repent,
 And trust myself forgiven by the God
 to whom I kneel.
 A little nearer? Yes. I shall hardly be
 content
 Till I be leper like yourself, my love,
 from head to heel.

XXIII.

O foolish dreams, that you, that I, would
 slight our marriage oath:
 I held you at that moment even dearer
 than before;
 Now God has made you leper in His
 loving care for both,
 That we might cling together, never
 doubt each other more.

XXIV.

The Priest, who join'd you to the dead,
 has join'd our hands of old;
 If man and wife be but one flesh, let
 mine be leprous too,
 As dead from all the human race as if
 beneath the mould;
 If you be dead, then I am dead, who
 only live for you.

XXV.

Would Earth tho' hid in cloud not be
 follow'd by the Moon?
 The leech forsake the dying bed for
 terror of his life?
 The shadow leave the Substance in the
 brooding light of noon?
 Or if I had been the leper would you
 have left the wife?

XXVI.

Not take them? Still you wave me off
 —poor roses—must I go—
 I have worn them year by year—from
 the bush we both had set—
 What? fling them to you?—well—that
 were hardly gracious. No!
 Your plague but passes by the touch.
 A little nearer yet!

XXVII.

There, there! he buried you, the Priest;
 the Priest is not to blame,
 He joins us once again, to his either
 office true:
 I thank him. I am happy, happy.
 Kiss me. In the name
 Of the everlasting God, I will live and
 die with you.

[DEAN MILMAN has remarked that the protection and care afforded by the Church to this blighted race of lepers was among the most beautiful of its offices during the Middle Ages. The leprosy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was supposed to be a legacy of the crusades, but was in all probability the offspring of meagre and unwholesome diet, miserable lodging and clothing, physical and moral degradation. The services of the Church in the seclusion of these unhappy sufferers were most affecting. The stern duty of looking to the public welfare is tempered with exquisite compassion for the victims of this loathsome disease. The ritual for the sequestration of the leprous differed little from the burial service. After the leper had been sprinkled with holy water, the priest conducted him into the church, the leper singing the psalm 'Libera me domine,' and the crucifix and bearer going before. In the church a black cloth was stretched over two trestles in front of the altar, and the leper leaning at its side devoutly heard mass. The priest, taking up a little earth in his cloak, threw it on one of the leper's feet, and put him out of the church, if it did not rain too heavily; took him to his hut in the midst of the fields, and then uttered the prohibitions: 'I forbid you entering the church . . . or entering the company of others. I forbid you quitting your home without your leper's dress.' He concluded: 'Take this dress, and wear it in token of humility; take these gloves, take this clapper, as a sign that you are forbidden to speak to any one. You are not to be indignant at being thus separated from others, and as to your little wants, good people will provide for you, and God will not desert you.' Then in this old ritual follow these sad words: 'When it shall come to pass that the leper shall pass out of this world, he shall be buried in his hut, and not in the churchyard.' At first there was a doubt whether wives should follow their husbands who had been leprous, or remain in the world and marry again. The Church decided that the marriage-tie was indissoluble, and so bestowed on these unhappy beings this immense source of consolation. With a love stronger than this living death, lepers were followed into banishment from the haunts of men by their faithful wives. Readers of Sir J. Stephen's *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography* will recollect the description of the founder of the Franciscan order, how, controlling his involuntary disgust, St. Francis of Assisi washed the feet and dressed the sores of the lepers, once at least reverently applying his lips to their wounds.—BOUCHER-JAMES.]

This ceremony of *quasi*-burial varied considerably at different times and in different places. In some cases a grave was dug, and the leper's face was often covered during the service.

TO ULYSSES.¹

I.

ULYSSES, much-experienced man,
Whose eyes have known this globe of
ours,
Her tribes of men, and trees, and
flowers,
From Corrientes to Japan,

II.

To you that bask below the Line,
I soaking here in winter wet—
The century's three strong eights have
met
To drag me down to seventy-nine

III.

In summer if I reach my day—
To you, yet young, who breathe the
balm
Of summer-winters by the palm
And orange grove of Paraguay,

IV.

I tolerant of the colder time,
Who love the winter woods, to trace
On paler heavens the branching grace
Of leafless elm, or naked lime,

V.

And see my cedar green, and there
My giant ilex keeping leaf
When frost is keen and days are brief—
Or marvel how in English air

VI.

My yucca, which no winter quells,
Altho' the months have scarce begun,
Has push'd toward our faintest sun
A spike of half-accomplish'd bells—

VII.

Or watch the waving pine which here
The warrior of Caprera set,²

¹ 'Ulysses,' the title of a number of essays by W. G. Palgrave. He died at Monte Video before seeing my poem.

² Garibaldi said to me, alluding to his barren island, 'I wish I had your trees.'

A name that earth will not forget
Till earth has roll'd her latest year—

VIII.

I, once half-crazed for larger light
On broader zones beyond the foam,
But chaining fancy now at home
Among the quarried downs of Wight,

IX.

Not less would yield full thanks to you
For your rich gift, your tale of lands
I know not,¹ your Arabian sands;
Your cane, your palm, tree-fern, bamboo,

X.

The wealth of tropic bower and brake;
Your Oriental Eden-isles,²
Where man, nor only Nature smiles;
Your wonder of the boiling lake;³

XI.

Phra-Chai, the Shadow of the Best,⁴
Phra-bat⁵ the step; your Pontic coast;
Crag-cloister;⁶ Anatolian Ghost;⁷
Hong-Kong,⁸ Karnac,⁹ and all the rest.

XII.

Thro' which I follow'd line by line
Your leading hand, and came, my
friend,
To prize your various book, and send
A gift of slenderer value, mine.

¹ The tale of Nejd.

² The Philippines.

³ In Dominica.

⁴ The Shadow of the Lord. Certain obscure markings on a rock in Siam, which express the image of Buddha to the Buddhist more or less distinctly according to his faith and his moral worth.

⁵ The footstep of the Lord on another rock.

⁶ The monastery of Sumelas.

⁷ Anatolian Spectre stories.

⁸ The Three Cities.

⁹ Travels in Egypt.

TO MARY BOYLE.

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

I.

'SPRING-FLOWERS'! While you still
delay to take
Your leave of Town,
Our elmtree's ruddy-hearted blossom-
flake
Is fluttering down.

II.

Be truer to your promise. There! I
heard
Our cuckoo call
Be needle to the magnet of your word,
Nor wait, till all

III.

Our vernal bloom from every vale and
plain
And garden pass,
And all the gold from each laburnum
chain
Drop to the grass.

IV.

Is memory with your Marian gone to rest,
Dead with the dead?
For ere she left us, when we met, you
prest
My hand, and said

V.

'I come with your spring-flowers.' You
came not, friend;
My birds would sing,
You heard not. Take then this spring-
flower I send,
This song of spring,

VI.

Found yesterday—forgotten mine own
rhyme
By mine old self,
As I shall be forgotten by old Time,
Laid on the shelf—

VII.

A rhyme that flower'd betwixt the whiten-
ing sloe
And kingcup blaze,
And more than half a hundred years ago,
In rick-fire days,

VIII.

When Dives loathed the times, and paced
his land
In fear of worse,
And sanguine Lazarus felt a vacant hand
Fill with *his* purse.

IX.

For lowly minds were madden'd to the
height
By tonguester tricks,
And once—I well remember that red
night
When thirty ricks,

X.

All flaming, made an English homestead
Hell—
These hands of mine
Have helpt to pass a bucket from the well
Along the line,

XI.

When this bare dome had not begun to
gleam
Thro' youthful curls,
And you were then a lover's fairy dream,
His girl of girls ;

XII.

And you, that now are lonely, and with
Grief
Sit face to face,
Might find a flickering glimmer of relief
In change of place.

XIII.

What use to brood? this life of mingled
pains
And joys to me,
Despite of every Faith and Creed, remains
The Mystery.

XIV.

Let golden youth bewail the friend, the
wife,
For ever gone.
He dreams of that long walk thro' desert
life
Without the one.

XV.

The silver year should cease to mourn
and sigh—
Not long to wait—
So close are we, dear Mary, you and I
To that dim gate.

XVI.

Take, read ! and be the faults your Poet
makes
Or many or few,
He rests content, if his young music
wakes
A wish in you

XVII.

To change our dark Queen-city, all her
realm
Of sound and smoke,
For his clear heaven, and these few lanes
of elm
And whispering oak.

THE PROGRESS OF SPRING.

I.

THE groundflame of the crocus breaks
the mould,
Fair Spring slides hither o'er the
Southern sea,
Wavers on her thin stem the snowdrop
cold
That trembles not to kisses of the bee :
Come, Spring, for now from all the
dripping eaves
The spear of ice has wept itself away,
And hour by hour unfolding woodbine
leaves
O'er his uncertain shadow droops the
day.

She comes ! The loosen'd rivulets run ;
The frost-bead melts upon her golden
hair ;

Her mantle, slowly greening in the Sun,
Now wraps her close, now arching
leaves her bare
To breaths of balmier air ;

II.

Up leaps the lark, gone wild to welcome
her,

About her glance the tits, and shriek
the jays,

Before her skims the jubilant woodpecker,
The linnet's bosom blushes at her gaze,
While round her brows a woodland culver
flits,

Watching her large light eyes and
gracious looks,

And in her open palm a halcyon sits
Patient—the secret splendour of the
brooks.

Come, Spring ! She comes on waste and
wood,

On farm and field : but enter also here,
Diffuse thyself at will thro' all my blood,
And, tho' thy violet sicken into sere,
Lodge with me all the year !

III.

Once more a downy drift against the
brakes,

Self-darken'd in the sky, descending
slow !

But gladly see I thro' the wavering flakes
Yon blanching apricot like snow in snow.

These will thine eyes not brook in forest-
paths,

On their perpetual pine, nor round
the beech ;

They fuse themselves to little spicy baths,
Solved in the tender blushes of the
peach ;

They lose themselves and die

On that new life that gems the haw-
thorn line ;

Thy gay lent-lilies wave and put them by,
And out once more in varnish'd glory
shine

Thy stars of celandine.

IV.

She floats across the hamlet. Heaven
lours,

But in the tearful splendour of her
smiles

I see the slowly-thickening chestnut
towers

Fill out the spaces by the barren tiles.
Now past her feet the swallow circling
flies,

A clamorous cuckoo stoops to meet
her hand ;

Her light makes rainbows in my closing
eyes,

I hear a charm of song thro' all the
land.

Come, Spring ! She comes, and Earth
is glad

To roll her North below thy deepening
dome,

But ere thy maiden birk be wholly clad,
And these low bushes dip their twigs
in foam,

Make all true hearths thy home.

V.

Across my garden ! and the thicket stirs,
The fountain pulses high in sunnier jets,
The blackcap warbles, and the turtle
purrs,

The starling claps his tiny castanets.

Still round her forehead wheels the
woodland dove,

And scatters on her throat the sparks
of dew,

The kingcup fills her footprint, and above
Broaden the glowing isles of vernal
blue.

Hail ample presence of a Queen,

Bountiful, beautiful, apparell'd gay,

Whose mantle, every shade of glancing
green,

Flies back in fragrant breezes to display
A tunic white as May !

VI.

She whispers, 'From the South I bring
you balm,

For on a tropic mountain was I born,

While some dark dweller by the coco-
palm
Watch'd my far meadow zoned with
airy morn ;
From under rose a muffled moan of
floods ;
I sat beneath a solitude of snow ;
There no one came, the turf was fresh,
the woods
Plunged gulf on gulf thro' all their
vales below.
I saw beyond their silent tops
The steaming marshes of the scarlet
cranes,
The slant seas leaning on the mangrove
copse,
And summer basking in the sultry
plains
About a land of canes ;

VII.

'Then from my vapour-girdle soaring
forth
I scaled the buoyant highway of the
birds,
And drank the dews and drizzle of the
North,
That I might mix with men, and hear
their words
On pathway'd plains ; for—while my
hand exults
Within the bloodless heart of lowly
flowers
To work old laws of Love to fresh
results,
Thro' manifold effect of simple powers—
I too would teach the man
Beyond the darker hour to see the
bright,
That his fresh life may close as it began,
The still-fulfilling promise of a light
Narrowing the bounds of night.'

VIII.

So wed thee with my soul, that I may
mark
The coming year's great good and
varied ills,
And new developments, whatever spark

Be struck from out the clash of warring
wills ;
Or whether, since our nature cannot rest,
The smoke of war's volcano burst
again
From hoary deeps that belt the changeful
West,
Old Empires, dwellings of the kings
of men ;
Or should those fail, that hold the helm,
While the long day of knowledge
grows and warms,
And in the heart of this most ancient
realm
A hateful voice be utter'd, and alarms
Sounding 'To arms ! to arms !'

IX.

A simpler, saner lesson might he learn
Who reads thy gradual process, Holy
Spring.
Thy leaves possess the season in their
turn,
And in their time thy warblers rise on
wing.
How surely glidest thou from March to
May,
And changest, breathing it, the sullen
wind,
Thy scope of operation, day by day,
Larger and fuller, like the human
mind !
Thy warmths from bud to bud
Accomplish that blind model in the
seed,
And men have hopes, which race the
restless blood,
That after many changes may succeed
Life, which is Life indeed.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM.

I.

O YOUNG Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician

With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
 And *I* am dying,
I am Merlin
 Who follow The Gleam.

II.

Mighty the Wizard
 Who found me at sunrise
 Sleeping, and woke me
 And learn'd me Magic !
 Great the Master,
 And sweet the Magic,
 When over the valley,
 In early summers,
 Over the mountain,
 On human faces,
 And all around me,
 Moving to melody,
 Floated The Gleam.

III.

Once at the croak of a Raven
 who crost it,
 A barbarous people,
 Blind to the magic,
 And deaf to the melody,
 Snarl'd at and cursed me.
 A demon vext me,
 The light retreated,
 The landskip darken'd,
 The melody deaden'd,
 The Master whisper'd
 'Follow The Gleam.'

IV.

Then to the melody,
 Over a wilderness
 Gliding, and glancing at
 Elf of the woodland,
 Gnome of the cavern,
 Griffin and Giant,
 And dancing of Fairies
 In desolate hollows,
 And wraiths of the mountain,
 And rolling of dragons
 By warble of water,
 Or cataract music
 Of falling torrents,
 Flitted The Gleam.

v.

Down from the mountain
 And over the level,
 And streaming and shining on
 Silent river,
 Silvery willow,
 Pasture and plowland,
 Innocent maidens,
 Garrulous children,
 Homestead and harvest,
 Reaper and gleaner,
 And rough-ruddy faces
 Of lowly labour,
 Slided The Gleam—

VI.

Then, with a melody
 Stronger and statelier,
 Led me at length
 To the city and palace
 Of Arthur the king;
 Touch'd at the golden
 Cross of the churches,
 Flash'd on the Tournament,
 Flicker'd and bicker'd
 From helmet to helmet,
 And last on the forehead
 Of Arthur the blameless
 Rested The Gleam.

VII.

Clouds and darkness
 Closed upon Camelot;
 Arthur had vanish'd
 I knew not whither,
 The king who loved me,
 And cannot die;
 For out of the darkness
 Silent and slowly
 The Gleam, that had waned to a
 wintry glimmer
 On icy fallow
 And faded forest,
 Drew to the valley
 Named of the shadow,
 And slowly brightening
 Out of the glimmer,
 And slowly moving again to a melody
 Yearningly tender,

Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII.

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came—
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX.

Not of the sunlight;
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

ROMNEY'S REMORSE.

'I read Hayley's Life of Romney the other day—Romney wanted but education and reading to make him a very fine painter; but his ideal

was not high nor fixed. How touching is the close of his life! He married at nineteen, and because Sir Joshua and others had said that "marriage spoils an artist" almost immediately left his wife in the North and scarce saw her till the end of his life; when old, nearly mad and quite desolate, he went back to her and she received him and nursed him till he died. This quiet act of hers is worth all Romney's pictures! even as a matter of Art, I am sure.' (*Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Fitzgerald*, vol. i.)

'BEAT, little heart—I give you this and this'

Who are you? What! the Lady
Hamilton?

Good, I am never weary painting you.
To sit once more? Cassandra, Hebe,

Joan,
Or spinning at your wheel beside the
vine—

Bacchante, what you will; and if I
fail

To conjure and concentrate into form
And colour all you are, the fault is less
In me than Art. What Artist ever yet
Could make pure light live on the canvas?
Art!

Why should I so disrelish that short word?
Where am I? snow on all the hills!
so hot,

So fever'd! never colt would more delight
To roll himself in meadow grass than I
To wallow in that winter of the hills.

Nurse, were you hired? or came of
your own will

To wait on one so broken, so forlorn?
Have I not met you somewhere long ago?
I am all but sure I have—in Kendal
church—

O yes! I hired you for a season there,
And then we parted; but you look so
kind

That you will not deny my sultry throat
One draught of icy water. There—you
spill

The drops upon my forehead. Your
hand shakes.

I am ashamed. I am a trouble to you,
Could kneel for your forgiveness. Are
they tears?

For me—they do me too much grace—
for me?

O Mary, Mary!

Vexing you with words!

Words only, born of fever, or the fumes
Of that dark opiate dose you gave me,
—words,

Wild babble. I have stumbled back
again

Into the common day, the sounder self.
God stay me there, if only for your sake,
The truest, kindest, noblest-hearted wife
That ever wore a Christian marriage-
ring.

My curse upon the Master's apothegm,
That wife and children drag an Artist
down!

This seem'd my lodestar in the Heaven
of Art,

And lured me from the household fire on
earth.

To you my days have been a life-long lie,
Grafted on half a truth; and tho' you say
'Take comfort you have won the Painter's
fame,'

The best in me that sees the worst in me,
And groans to see it, finds no comfort
there.

What fame? I am not Raphaël,
Titian—no

Nor even a Sir Joshua, some will cry.

Wrong there! The painter's fame? but
mine, that grew

Blown into glittering by the popular
breath,

May float awhile beneath the sun, may
roll

The rainbow hues of heaven about it—
There!

The colour'd bubble bursts above the
abyss

Of Darkness, utter Lethe.

Is it so?

Her sad eyes plead for my own fame
with me

To make it dearer.

Look, the sun has risen
To flame along another dreary day.

Your hand. How bright you keep your
marriage-ring!

Raise me. I thank you.

Has your opiate then

Bred this black mood? or am I conscious,
more

Than other Masters, of the chasm
between

Work and Ideal? Or does the gloom
of Age

And suffering cloud the height I stand
upon

Even from myself? stand? stood . . .
no more.

And yet

The world would lose, if such a wife as
you

Should vanish unrecorded. Might I
crave

One favour? I am bankrupt of all claim
On your obedience, and my strongest
wish

Falls flat before your least unwillingness.
Still would you—if it please you—sit
to me?

I dream'd last night of that clear
summer noon,

When seated on a rock, and foot to foot
With your own shadow in the placid lake,
You claspt our infant daughter, heart to
heart.

I had been among the hills, and brought
you down

A length of staghorn-moss, and this you
twined

About her cap. I see the picture yet,
Mother and child. A sound from far
away,

No louder than a bee among the flowers,
A fall of water lull'd the noon asleep.

You still'd it for the moment with a song
Which often echo'd in me, while I stood
Before the great Madonna-masterpieces
Of ancient Art in Paris, or in Rome.

Mary, my crayons! if I can, I will.

You should have been—I might have
made you once,

Had I but known you as I know you
now—

The true Alcestis of the time. Your
song—

Sit, listen! I remember it, a proof
That I—even I—at times remember'd
you.

'Beat upon mine, little heart! beat,
beat!

Beat upon mine! you are mine, my
sweet!

All mine from your pretty blue eyes
to your feet,

My sweet.'

Less profile! turn to me—three-quarter
face.

'Sleep, little blossom, my honey, my
bliss!

For I give you this, and I give you
this!

And I blind your pretty blue eyes with
a kiss!

Sleep!'

Too early blinded by the kiss of death—

'Father and Mother will watch you
grow'—

You watch'd not I, she did not grow,
she died.

'Father and Mother will watch you
grow,

And gather the roses whenever they
blow,

And find the white heather wherever
you go,

My sweet.'

Ah, my white heather only blooms in
heaven

With Milton's amaranth. There, there,
there! a child

Had shamed me at it—Down, you idle
tools,

Stamp'd into dust—tremulous, all awry,
Blurr'd like a landskip in a ruffled pool,—
Not one stroke firm. This Art, that
harlot-like

Seduced me from you, leaves me harlot-
like,

Who love her still, and whimper, im-
potent

To win her back before I die—and
then—

Then, in the loud world's bastard judg-
ment-day,

One truth will damn me with the mind-
less mob,

Who feel no touch of my temptation,
more

Than all the myriad lies, that blacken
round

The corpse of every man that gains a
name;

'This model husband, this fine Artist'
Fool,

What matters? Six foot deep of burial
mould

Will dull their comments! Ay, but when
the shout

Of His descending peals from Heaven,
and throbs

Thro' earth, and all her graves, if *He*
should ask

'Why left you wife and children? for
my sake,

According to my word?' and I replied
'Nay, Lord, for *Art*,' why, that would

sound so mean
That all the dead, who wait the doom of
Hell

For bolder sins than mine, adulteries,
Wife-murders,—nay, the ruthless Mussul-
man

Who flings his bowstrung Harem in the
sea,

Would turn, and glare at me, and point
and jeer,

And gibber at the worm, who, living,
made

The wife of wives a widow-bride, and
lost

Salvation for a sketch.

I am wild again!

The coals of fire you heap upon my head
Have crazed me. Someone knocking

there without?

No! Will my Indian brother come? to
find

Me or my coffin? Should I know the
man?

This worn-out Reason dying in her house

May leave the windows blinded, and if
 so,
 Bid him farewell for me, and tell him—
 Hope!
 I hear a death-bed Angel whisper 'Hope.'
 "The miserable have no medicine
 But only Hope!" He said it . . . in
 the play.
 His crime was of the senses; of the mind
 Mine; worse, cold, calculated.
 Tell my son—
 O let me lean my head upon your breast.
 'Beat little heart' on this fool brain of
 mine.
 I once had friends—and many—none
 like you.
 I love you more than when we married.
 Hope!
 O yes, I hope, or fancy that, perhaps,
 Human forgiveness touches heaven, and
 thence—
 For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
 Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven.

PARNASSUS.

Exegi monumentum . . .
 Quod non . . .
 Possit diruere . . .
 . . . innumerabilis
 Annorum series et fuga temporum.—HORACE.

I.

WHAT be those crown'd forms high over
 the sacred fountain?
 Bards, that the mighty Muses have raised
 to the heights of the mountain,
 And over the flight of the Ages! O
 Goddesses, help me up thither!
 Lightning may shrivel the laurel of
 Cæsar, but mine would not wither.
 Steep is the mountain, but you, you will
 help me to overcome it,
 And stand with my head in the zenith,
 and roll my voice from the summit,
 Sounding for ever and ever thro' Earth
 and her listening nations,
 And mixt with the great Sphere-music of
 stars and of constellations.

II.

What be those two shapes high over the
 sacred fountain,
 Taller than all the Muses, and huger
 than all the mountain?
 On those two known peaks they stand
 ever spreading and heightening;
 Poet, that evergreen laurel is blasted by
 more than lightning!
 Look, in their deep double shadow the
 crown'd ones all disappearing!
 Sing like a bird and be happy, nor hope
 for a deathless hearing!
 'Sounding for ever and ever?' pass on!
 the sight confuses—
 These are Astronomy and Geology, ter-
 rible Muses!

III.

If the lips were touch'd with fire from off
 a pure Pierian altar,
 Tho' their music here be mortal need the
 singer greatly care?
 Other songs for other worlds! the fire
 within him would not falter;
 Let the golden Iliad vanish, Homer here
 is Homer there.

BY AN EVOLUTIONIST.

THE Lord let the house of a brute to the
 soul of a man,
 And the man said 'Am I your debtor?'
 And the Lord—'Not yet: but make it
 as clean as you can,
 And then I will let you a better.'

I.

If my body come from brutes, my soul
 uncertain, or a fable,
 Why not bask amid the senses while
 the sun of morning shines,
 I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds,
 and in my stable,
 Youth and Health, and birth and
 wealth, and choice of women and
 of wines?

II.

What hast thou done for me, grim Old
Age, save breaking my bones on
the rack?

Would I had past in the morning that
looks so bright from afar!

OLD AGE.

Done for thee? starved the wild beast
that was linkt with thee eighty
years back.

Less weight now for the ladder-of-
heaven that hangs on a star.

I.

If my body come from brutes, tho'
somewhat finer than their own,

I am heir, and this my kingdom.
Shall the royal voice be mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag
me from the throne,

Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and
rule thy Province of the brute.

II.

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and
I gaze at a field in the Past,

Where I sank with the body at times
in the sloughs of a low desire,

But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the
Man is quiet at last

As he stands on the heights of his life
with a glimpse of a height that is
higher.

FAR—FAR—AWAY.

(FOR MUSIC.)

WHAT sight so lured him thro' the fields
he knew

As where earth's green stole into heaven's
own hue,

Far—far—away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells

Far—far—away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain
or joy,

Thro' those three words would haunt him
when a boy,

Far—far—away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a
breath

From some fair dawn beyond the doors
of death

Far—far—away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of
Birth,

The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far—far—away?

What charm in words, a charm no words
could give?

O dying words, can Music make you live
Far—far—away?

POLITICS.

We move, the wheel must always move,

Nor always on the plain,

And if we move to such a goal

As Wisdom hopes to gain,

Then you that drive, and know your Craft,

Will firmly hold the rein,

Nor lend an ear to random cries,

Or you may drive in vain,

For some cry 'Quick' and some cry
'Slow,'

But, while the hills remain,

Up hill 'Too-slow' will need the whip,

Down hill 'Too-quick,' the chain.

BEAUTIFUL CITY.

BEAUTIFUL city, the centre and crater
of European confusion,

O you with your passionate shriek for
the rights of an equal humanity,

How often your Re-volution has proven
but E-volution

Roll'd again back on itself in the tides of
a civic insanity!

THE ROSES ON THE
TERRACE.

ROSE, on this terrace fifty years ago,
 When I was in my June, you in your
 May,
 Two words, '*My Rose*' set all your face
 aglow,
 And now that I am white, and you are
 gray,
 That blush of fifty years ago, my dear,
 Blooms in the Past, but close to me
 to-day
 As this red rose, which on our terrace here
 Glows in the blue of fifty miles away.

THE PLAY.

ACT first, this Earth, a stage so gloom'd
 with woe
 You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.
 And yet be patient. Our Playwright
 may show
 In some fifth Act what this wild Drama
 means.

ON ONE WHO AFFECTED
AN EFFEMINATE MANNER.

WHILE man and woman still are incom-
 plete,
 I prize that soul where man and woman
 meet,
 Which types all Nature's male and female
 plan,
 But, friend, man-woman is not woman-
 man.

TO ONE WHO RAN DOWN
THE ENGLISH.

You make our faults too gross, and thence
 maintain
 Our darker future. May your fears be
 vain!
 At times the small black fly upon the pane
 May seem the black ox of the distant plain.

THE SNOWDROP.

MANY, many welcomes
 February fair-maid,
 Ever as of old time,
 Solitary firstling,
 Coming in the cold time,
 Prophet of the gay time,
 Prophet of the May time,
 Prophet of the roses,
 Many, many welcomes
 February fair-maid!

THE THROSTLE.

'SUMMER is coming, summer is coming.
 I know it, I know it, I know it.
 Light again, leaf again, life again, love
 again,'
 Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
 Last year you sang it as gladly.
 'New, new, new, new'! Is it then *so*
 new
 That you should carol so madly?

'Love again, song again, nest again, young
 again,'
 Never a prophet so crazy!
 And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,
 See, there is hardly a daisy.

'Here again, here, here, here, happy
 year'!
 O warble unchidden, unbidden!
 Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
 And all the winters are hidden.

THE OAK.

LIVE thy Life,
 Young and old,
 Like yon oak,
 Bright in spring,
 Living gold;

Summer-rich
 Then ; and then
 Autumn-changed,
 Soberer-hued
 Gold again.

All his leaves
 Fall'n at length,
 Look, he stands,
 Trunk and bough,
 Naked strength.

IN MEMORIAM.

W. G. WARD.

FAREWELL, whose living like I shall
 not find,
 Whose Faith and Work were bells of
 full accord,
 My friend, the most unworldly of man-
 kind,
 Most generous of all Ultramontanes,
 Ward,
 How subtle at tierce and quart of mind
 with mind,
 How loyal in the following of thy
 Lord !

THE DEATH OF CENONE

AND OTHER POEMS.

JUNE BRACKEN AND HEATHER.

To E. T.

THERE on the top of the down,
The wild heather round me and over me
 June's high blue,
When I look'd at the bracken so bright
 and the heather so brown,
I thought to myself I would offer this
 book to you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of
 the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the
 gloom of the heather.

TO THE MASTER OF BALLIOL.

I.

DEAR Master in our classic town,
You, loved by all the younger gown
 There at Balliol,
Lay your Plato for one minute down,

II.

And read a Grecian tale re-told,
Which, cast in later Grecian mould,
 Quintus Calaber
Somewhat lazily handled of old ;

III.

And on this white midwinter day—
For have the far-off hymns of May,
 All her melodies,
All her harmonies echo'd away ?—

IV.

To-day, before you turn again
To thoughts that lift the soul of men,
 Hear my cataract's
Downward thunder in hollow and glen,

V.

Till, led by dream and vague desire,
The woman, gliding toward the pyre,
 Find her warrior
Stark and dark in his funeral fire.

THE DEATH OF CENONE.

CENONE sat within the cave from out
Whose ivy-matted mouth she used to gaze
Down at the Troad ; but the goodly view
Was now one blank, and all the serpent
 vines
Which on the touch of heavenly feet had
 risen,
And gliding thro' the branches over-
 bower'd
The naked Three, were wither'd long
 ago,
And thro' the sunless winter morning-
 mist
In silence wept upon the flowerless earth.
 And while she stared at those dead
 cords that ran
Dark thro' the mist, and linking tree to
 tree,
But once were gayer than a dawning sky
With many a pendent bell and fragrant
 star,
Her Past became her Present, and she
 saw
Him, climbing toward her with the
 golden fruit,
Him, happy to be chosen Judge of Gods,
Her husband in the flush of youth and
 dawn,
Paris, himself as beauteous as a God.

Anon from out the long ravine below,
 She heard a wailing cry, that seem'd at first
 Thin as the batlike shrillings of the Dead
 When driven to Hades, but, in coming near,
 Across the downward thunder of the brook
 Sounded 'Cenone'; and on a sudden he,
 Paris, no longer beauteous as a God,
 Struck by a poison'd arrow in the fight,
 Lame, crooked, reeling, livid, thro' the mist
 Rose, like the wraith of his dead self,
 and moan'd
 'Cenone, *my* Cenone, while we dwelt
 Together in this valley—happy then—
 Too happy had I died within thine arms,
 Before the feud of Gods had marr'd our peace,
 And sunder'd each from each. I am dying now
 Pierced by a poison'd dart. Save me.
 Thou knowest,
 Taught by some God, whatever herb or balm
 May clear the blood from poison, and thy fame
 Is blown thro' all the Troad, and to thee
 The shepherd brings his adder-bitten lamb,
 The wounded warrior climbs from Troy to thee.
 My life and death are in thy hand. The Gods
 Avenge on stony hearts a fruitless prayer
 For pity. Let me owe my life to thee.
 I wrought thee bitter wrong, but thou forgive,
 Forget it. Man is but the slave of Fate.
 Cenone, by thy love which once was mine,
 Help, heal me. I am poison'd to the heart.'
 'And I to mine' she said 'Adulterer,
 Go back to thine adulteress and die!'
 He groan'd, he turn'd, and in the mist at once
 Became a shadow, sank and disappear'd,

But, ere the mountain rolls into the plain,
 Fell headlong dead; and of the shepherds one
 Their oldest, and the same who first had found
 Paris, a naked babe, among the woods
 Of Ida, following lighted on him there,
 And shouted, and the shepherds heard and came.
 One raised the Prince, one sleek'd the squalid hair,
 One kiss'd his hand, another closed his eyes,
 And then, remembering the gay playmate rear'd
 Among them, and forgetful of the man,
 Whose crime had half unpeopled Ilium, these
 All that day long labour'd, hewing the pines,
 And built their shepherd-prince a funeral pile;
 And, while the star of eve was drawing light
 From the dead sun, kindled the pyre, and all
 Stood round it, hush'd, or calling on his name.
 But when the white fog vanish'd like a ghost
 Before the day, and every topmost pine
 Spired into bluest heaven, still in her cave,
 Amazed, and ever seeming stared upon
 By ghastlier than the Gorgon head, a face,—
 His face deform'd by lurid blotch and blain—
 There, like a creature frozen to the heart
 Beyond all hope of warmth, Cenone sat
 Not moving, till in front of that ravine
 Which drowed in gloom, self-darken'd from the west,
 The sunset blazed along the wall of Troy.
 Then her head sank, she slept, and thro' her dream
 A ghostly murmur floated, 'Come to me,
 Cenone! I can wrong thee now no more,
 Cenone, *my* Cenone,' and the dream

Wail'd in her, when she woke beneath
the stars.

What star could burn so low? not
Ilion yet.

What light was there? She rose and
slowly down,

By the long torrent's ever-deepen'd roar,
Paced, following, as in trance, the silent
cry.

She waked a bird of prey that scream'd
and past;

She roused a snake that hissing writhed
away;

A panther sprang across her path, she
heard

The shriek of some lost life among the
pines,

But when she gain'd the broader vale,
and saw

The ring of faces redden'd by the flames
Enfolding that dark body which had lain
Of old in her embrace, paused—and then
ask'd

Falteringly, 'Who lies on yonder pyre?'
But every man was mute for reverence.

Then moving quickly forward till the heat
Smote on her brow, she lifted up a voice
Of shrill command, 'Who burns upon
the pyre?'

Whereon their oldest and their boldest
said,

'He, whom thou wouldst not heal!' and
all at once

The morning light of happy marriage
broke

Thro' all the clouded years of widowhood,
And muffling up her comely head, and
crying

'Husband!' she leapt upon the funeral
pile,

And mixt herself with *him* and past in
fire.

ST. TELEMACHUS.

HAD the fierce ashes of some fiery peak
Been hurl'd so high they ranged about
the globe?

For day by day, thro' many a blood-red
eve,

In that four-hundredth summer after
Christ,

The wrathful sunset glared against a cross
Rear'd on the tumbled ruins of an old
fane

No longer sacred to the Sun, and flamed
On one huge slope beyond, where in his
cave

The man, whose pious hand had built
the cross,

A man who never changed a word with
men,

Fasted and pray'd, Telemachus the Saint.

Eve after eve that haggard anchorite
Would haunt the desolated fane, and
there

Gaze at the ruin, often mutter low

'Vicisti Galilæe'; louder again,
Spurning a shatter'd fragment of the
God,

'Vicisti Galilæe!' but—when now
Bathed in that lurid crimson—ask'd 'Is
earth

On fire to the West? or is the Demon-
god

Wroth at his fall?' and heard an answer
'Wake

Thou deedless dreamer, lazying out a life
Of self-suppression, not of selfless love.'

And once a flight of shadowy fighters
crost

The disk, and once, he thought, a shape
with wings

Came sweeping by him, and pointed to
the West,

And at his ear he heard a whisper
'Rome'

And in his heart he cried 'The call of
God!'

And call'd arose, and, slowly plunging
down

Thro' that disastrous glory, set his face
By waste and field and town of alien
tongue,

Following a hundred sunsets, and the
sphere

Of westward-wheeling stars; and every
dawn

Struck from him his own shadow on to
Rome.

Foot-sore, way-worn, at length he
 touch'd his goal,
 The Christian city. All her splendour
 fail'd
 To lure those eyes that only yearn'd to
 see,
 Fleeting betwixt her column'd palace-
 walls,
 The shape with wings. Anon there past
 a crowd
 With shameless laughter, Pagan oath,
 and jest,
 Hard Romans brawling of their mon-
 strous games;
 He, all but deaf thro' age and wear-
 ness,
 And muttering to himself 'The call of
 God'
 And borne along by that full stream of
 men,
 Like some old wreck on some indrawing
 sea,
 Gain'd their huge Colosseum. The caged
 beast
 Yell'd, as he yell'd of yore for Christian
 blood.
 Three slaves were trailing a dead lion
 away,
 One, a dead man. He stumbled in, and
 sat
 Blinded; but when the momentary gloom,
 Made by the noonday blaze without, had
 left
 His aged eyes, he raised them, and
 beheld
 A blood-red awning waver overhead,
 The dust send up a steam of human
 blood,
 The gladiators moving toward their fight,
 And eighty thousand Christian faces
 watch
 Man murder man. A sudden strength
 from heaven,
 As some great shock may wake a palsied
 limb,
 Turn'd him again to boy, for up he
 sprang,
 And glided lightly down the stairs, and
 o'er

The barrier that divided beast from man
 Slipt, and ran on, and flung himself
 between
 The gladiatorial swords, and call'd 'For-
 bear
 In the great name of Him who died for
 men,
 Christ Jesus!' For one moment after-
 ward
 A silence follow'd as of death, and then
 A hiss as from a wilderness of snakes,
 Then one deep roar as of a breaking sea,
 And then a shower of stones that stoned
 him dead,
 And then once more a silence as of death.
 His dream became a deed that woke
 the world,
 For while the frantic rabble in half-amaze
 Stared at him dead, thro' all the nobler
 hearts
 In that vast Oval ran a shudder of shame.
 The Baths, the Forum gabbled of his
 death,
 And preachers linger'd o'er his dying
 words,
 Which would not die, but echo'd on to
 reach
 Honorius, till he heard them, and de-
 creed
 That Rome no more should wallow in
 this old lust
 Of Paganism, and make her festal hour
 Dark with the blood of man who mur-
 der'd man.

[For Honorius, who succeeded to the sover-
 eighty over Europe, suppress the gladiatorial
 combats practised of old in Rome, on occasion
 of the following event. There was one Tele-
 machus, embracing the ascetic mode of life, who
 setting out from the East and arriving at Rome
 for this very purpose, while that accursed spec-
 tacle was being performed, entered himself the
 circus, and descending into the arena, attempted
 to hold back those who wielded deadly weapons
 against each other. The spectators of the mur-
 derous fray, possess'd with the drunken glee of
 the demon who delights in such bloodshed, stoned
 to death the preacher of peace. The admirable
 Emperor learning this put a stop to that evil ex-
 hibition.—Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*.]

AKBAR'S DREAM.

AN INSCRIPTION BY ABUL FAZL FOR
A TEMPLE IN KASHMIR (Bloch-
mann xxxii.).

O GOD in every temple I see people that
see thee, and in every language I hear
spoken, people praise thee.

Polytheism and Islâm feel after thee.

Each religion says, 'Thou art one, with-
out equal.'

If it be a mosque people murmur the
holy prayer, and if it be a Christian Church,
people ring the bell from love to Thee.

Sometimes I frequent the Christian
cloister, and sometimes the mosque.

But it is thou whom I search from
temple to temple.

Thy elect have no dealings with either
heresy or orthodoxy; for neither of them
stands behind the screen of thy truth.

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to
the orthodox,

But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to
the heart of the perfume seller.

AKBAR and ABUL FAZL *before the palace
at Futehpur-Sikri at night.*

'LIGHT of the nations' ask'd his
Chronicler

Of Akbar 'what has darken'd thee to-
night?'

Then, after one quick glance upon the
stars,

And turning slowly toward him, Akbar
said

'The shadow of a dream—an idle one
It may be. Still I raised my heart to
heaven,

I pray'd against the dream. To pray,
to do—

To pray, to do according to the prayer,
Are, both, to worship Alla, but the
prayers,

That have no successor in deed, are faint
And pale in Alla's eyes, fair mothers
they

Dying in childbirth of dead sons. I vow'd
Whate'er my dreams, I still would do
the right

Thro' all the vast dominion which a sword,
That only conquers men to conquer
peace,

Has won me. Alla be my guide!

But come,

My noble friend, my faithful counsellor,
Sit by my side. While thou art one
with me,

I seem no longer like a lonely man

In the king's garden, gathering here and
there

From each fair plant the blossom choicest-
grown

To wreath a crown not only for the
king

But in due time for every Mussulmân,
Brahmin, and Buddhist, Christian, and
Parsee,

Thro' all the warring world of Hindustan
Well spake thy brother in his hymn to
heaven

"Thy glory baffles wisdom. All the
tracks

Of science making toward Thy Perfect-
ness

Are blinding desert sand; we scarce can
spell

The Alif of Thine alphabet of Love."

He knows Himself, men nor themselves
nor Him,

For every splinter'd fraction of a sect
Will clamour "I am on the Perfect Way,
All else is to perdition."

Shall the rose

Cry to the lotus "No flower thou"? the
palm

Call to the cypress "I alone am fair"?
The mango spurn the melon at his foot?

"Mine is the one fruit Alla made for
man."

Look how the living pulse of Alla beats
Thro' all His world. If every single star
Should shriek its claim "I only am in
heaven"

Why that were such sphere-music as the
Greek

Had hardly dream'd of. There is light
in all,

And light, with more or less of shade,
in all

Man-modes of worship ; but our Ulama,
 Who "sitting on green sofas contem-
 plate
 The torment of the damn'd" already,
 these
 Are like wild brutes new-caged—the
 narrower
 The cage, the more their fury. Me they
 front
 With sullen brows. What wonder ! I
 decreed
 That even the dog was clean, that men
 may taste
 Swine-flesh, drink wine ; they know too
 that when'er
 In our free Hall, where each philosophy
 And mood of faith may hold its own,
 they blurt
 Their furious formalisms, I but hear
 The clash of tides that meet in narrow
 seas.—
 Not the Great Voice not the true Deep.

To drive

A people from their ancient fold of Faith,
 And wall them up perforce in mine—
 unwise,
 Unkinglike ;—and the morning of my
 reign
 Was reddened by that cloud of shame
 when I . . .

I hate the rancour of their castes and
 creeds,

I let men worship as they will, I reap
 No revenue from the field of unbelief.
 I cull from every faith and race the best
 And bravest soul for counsellor and
 friend.

I loathe the very name of infidel.
 I stagger at the Korân and the sword.
 I shudder at the Christian and the stake ;
 Yet "Alla," says their sacred book, "is
 Love,"

And when the Goan Padre quoting Him,
 Issa Ben Mariam, his own prophet, cried
 "Love one another little ones" and
 "bless"

Whom ? even "your persecutors" ! there
 methought

The cloud was rifted by a purer gleam
 Than glances from the sun of our Islâm.

And thou rememberest what a fury
 shook
 Those pillars of a moulder'd faith, when
 he,
 That other, prophet of their fall, pro-
 claimed
 His Master as "the Sun of Righteous-
 ness,"
 Yea, Alla here on earth, who caught
 and held
 His people by the bridle-rein of Truth.
 What art thou saying ? "And was
 not Alla call'd
 In old Irân the Sun of Love ? and Love
 The net of truth ?"

A voice from old Irân !

Nay, but I know it—*his*, the hoary Sheik,
 On whom the women shrieking "Atheist"
 flung
 Filth from the roof, the mystic melodist
 Who all but lost himself in Alla, him
 Abû Saïd—

—a sun but dimly seen

Here, till the mortal morning mists of
 earth
 Fade in the noon of heaven, when creed
 and race
 Shall bear false witness, each of each, no
 more,
 But find their limits by that larger light,
 And overstep them, moving easily
 Thro' after-ages in the love of Truth,
 The truth of Love.

The sun, the sun ! they rail
 At me the Zoroastrian. Let the Sun,
 Who heats our earth to yield us grain
 and fruit,
 And laughs upon thy field as well as
 mine,
 And warms the blood of Shiah and
 Sunnee,
 Symbol the Eternal ! Yea and may not
 kings
 Express Him also by their warmth of
 love
 For all they rule—by equal law for all ?
 By deeds a light to men ?

But no such light
 Glanced from our Presence on the face
 of one.

Who breaking in upon us yestermorn,
 With all the Hells a-glare in either eye,
 Yell'd "hast *thou* brought us down a
 new Korân
 From heaven? art *thou* the Prophet?
 canst *thou* work
 Miracles?" and the wild horse, anger,
 plunged
 To fling me, and fail'd. Miracles! no,
 not I
 Nor he, nor any. I can but lift the torch
 Of Reason in the dusky cave of Life,
 And gaze on this great miracle, the
 World,
 Adoring That who made, and makes,
 and is,
 And is not, what I gaze on—all else
 Form,
 Ritual, varying with the tribes of men.
 Ay but, my friend, thou knowest I
 hold that forms
 Are needful: only let the hand that rules,
 With politic care, with utter gentleness,
 Mould them for all his people.
 And what are forms?
 Fair garments, plain or rich, and fitting
 close
 Or flying looselier, warm'd but by the
 heart
 Within them, moved but by the living
 limb,
 And cast aside, when old, for newer,—
 Forms!
 The Spiritual in Nature's market-place—
 The silent Alphabet-of-heaven-in-man
 Made vocal—banners blazoning a Power
 That is not seen and rules from far away—
 A silken cord let down from Paradise,
 When fine Philosophies would fail, to
 draw
 The crowd from wallowing in the mire
 of earth,
 And all the more, when these behold
 their Lord,
 Who shaped the forms, obey them, and
 himself
 Here on this bank in *some* way live the
 life
 Beyond the bridge, and serve that Infinite
 Within us, as without, that All-in-all,

And over all, the never-changing One
 And ever-changing Many, in praise of
 Whom
 The Christian bell, the cry from off the
 mosque,
 And vaguer voices of Polytheism
 Make but one music, harmonising
 "Pray."
 There westward—under yon slow-
 falling star,
 The Christians own a Spiritual Head;
 And following thy true counsel, by thine
 aid,
 Myself am such in our Islâm, for no
 Mirage of glory, but for power to fuse
 My myriads into union under one;
 To hunt the tiger of oppression out
 From office; and to spread the Divine
 Faith
 Like calming oil on all their stormy
 creeds,
 And fill the hollows between wave and
 wave;
 To nurse my children on the milk of
 Truth,
 And alchemise old hates into the gold
 Of Love, and make it current; and beat
 back
 The menacing poison of intolerant priests,
 Those cobras ever setting up their hoods—
 One Alla! one Kalifa!
 Still—at times
 A doubt, a fear,—and yester afternoon
 I dream'd,—thou knowest how deep a
 well of love
 My heart is for my son, Saleem, mine
 heir,—
 And yet so wild and wayward that my
 dream—
 He glares askance at thee as one of those
 Who mix the wines of heresy in the cup
 Of counsel—so—I pray thee—
 Well, I dream'd
 That stone by stone I rear'd a sacred
 fane,
 A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque, nor
 Church,
 But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
 To every breath from heaven, and Truth
 and Peace

And Love and Justice came and dwelt
therein ;

But while we stood rejoicing, I and thou,
I heard a mocking laugh "the new
Korân !"

And on the sudden, and with a cry
"Saleem"

Thou, thou—I saw thee fall before me,
and then

Me too the black-wing'd Azrael over-
came,

But Death had ears and eyes ; I watch'd
my son,

And those that follow'd, loosen, stone
from stone,

All my fair work ; and from the ruin
arose

The shriek and curse of trampled millions,
even

As in the time before ; but while I
groan'd,

From out the sunset pour'd an alien race,
Who fitted stone to stone again, and
Truth,

Peace, Love and Justice came and dwelt
therein,

Nor in the field without were seen or
heard

Fires of Súttee, nor wail of baby-wife,
Or Indian widow ; and in sleep I said
"All praise to Alla by whatever hands
My mission be accomplish'd !" but we
hear

Music : our palace is awake, and morn
Has lifted the dark eyelash of the Night
From off the rosy cheek of waking Day.
Our hymn to the sun. They sing it.
Let us go.'

HYMN.

I.

Once again thou flameest heavenward,
once again we see thee rise.

Every morning is thy birthday gladdening
human hearts and eyes.

Every morning here we greet it,
bowing lowly down before thee,

Thee the Godlike, thee the changeless in
thine ever-changing skies.

II.

Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing
light from clime to clime,

Hear thy myriad laureates hail thee
monarch in their woodland rhyme.

Warble bird, and open flower, and,
men, below the dome of azure

Kneel adoring Him the Timeless in the
flame that measures Time!

NOTES TO AKBAR'S DREAM.

The great Mogul Emperor Akbar was born October 14, 1542, and died 1605. At 13 he succeeded his father Humayun ; at 18 he himself assumed the sole charge of government. He subdued and ruled over fifteen large provinces ; his empire included all India north of the Vindhya Mountains—in the south of India he was not so successful. His tolerance of religions and his abhorrence of religious persecution put our Tudors to shame. He invented a new eclectic religion by which he hoped to unite all creeds, castes and peoples : and his legislation was remarkable for vigour, justice and humanity.

'*Thy glory baffles wisdom.*' The Emperor quotes from a hymn to the Deity by Faizi, brother of Abul Fazl, Akbar's chief friend and minister, who wrote the *Ain i Akbari* (Annals of Akbar). His influence on his age was immense. It may be that he and his brother Faizi led Akbar's mind away from Islâm and the Prophet—this charge is brought against him by every Muhammadan writer ; but Abul Fazl also led his sovereign to a true appreciation of his duties, and from the moment that he entered Court, the problem of successfully ruling over mixed races, which Islâm in few other countries had to solve, was carefully considered, and the policy of toleration was the result (Blochmann xxix.).

Abul Fazl thus gives an account of himself 'The advice of my Father with difficulty kept me back from acts of folly ; my mind had no rest and my heart felt itself drawn to the sages of Mongolia or to the hermits on Lebanon. I longed for interviews with the Llamás of Tibet or with the padres of Portugal, and I would gladly sit with the priests of the Parsis and the learned of the Zendavesta. I was sick of the learned of my own land.'

He became the intimate friend and adviser of Akbar, and helped him in his tolerant system of government. Professor Blochmann writes 'Impressed with a favourable idea of the value of his Hindu subjects, he (Akbar) had resolved when pensively sitting in the evenings on the solitary

stone at Futehpur-Sikri to rule with an even hand all men in his dominions; but as the extreme views of the learned and the lawyers continually urged him to persecute instead of to heal, he instituted discussions, because, believing himself to be in error, he thought it his duty as ruler to inquire.' 'These discussions took place every Thursday night in the Ibadat-khana a building at Futehpur-Sikri, erected for the purpose' (Malleeson).

In these discussions Abul Fazl became a great power, and he induced the chief of the disputants to draw up a document defining the 'divine Faith' as it was called, and assigning to Akbar the rank of a Mujahid, or supreme khalifah, the vicegerent of the one true God.

Abul Fazl was finally murdered at the instigation of Akbar's son Salim, who in his Memoirs declares that it was Abul Fazl who had perverted his father's mind so that he denied the divine mission of Mahomet, and turned away his love from his son.

Faizi. When Akbar conquered the North-West Provinces of India, Faizi, then 20, began his life as a poet, and earned his living as a physician. He is reported to have been very generous and to have treated the poor for nothing. His fame reached Akbar's ears who commanded him to come to the camp at Chitor. Akbar was delighted with his varied knowledge and scholarship and made the poet teacher to his sons. Faizi at 33 was appointed Chief Poet (1588). He collected a fine library of 4300 MSS. and died at the age of 40 (1595) when Akbar incorporated his collection of rare books in the Imperial Library.

The warring world of Hindostan. Akbar's rapid conquests and the good government of his fifteen provinces with their complete military, civil and political systems make him conspicuous among the great kings of history.

The Goan Padre. Abul Fazl relates that 'one night the Ibadat-khana was brightened by the presence of Padre Rodolpho, who for intelligence and wisdom was unrivalled among Christian doctors. Several carping and bigoted men attacked him and this afforded an opportunity for the display of the calm judgment and justice of the assembly. These men brought forward the old received assertions, and did not attempt to arrive at truth by reasoning. Their statements were torn to pieces, and they were nearly put to shame, when they began to attack the contradictions of the Gospel, but they could not prove their assertions. With perfect calmness, and earnest conviction of the truth he replied to their arguments.

Abū Sa'īd. 'Love is the net of Truth, Love is the noose of God' is a quotation from the great Sufee poet Abū Sa'īd—born A.D. 968, died at the age of 83. He is a mystical poet, and some of his expressions have been compared to our George Herbert. Of Shaikh Abū Sa'īd it is recorded that he said, 'when my affairs had reached a certain pitch I buried under the dust my books and opened a shop on my own account (*i.e.* began to teach with authority), and verily men represented me as that which I was not, until it came to this, that they went to the Qādhi and testified against me of unbelief; and women got upon the roofs and cast unclean things upon me.' (*Vide* reprint from article in *National Review*, March 1891, by C. J. Pickering.)

Aziz. I am not aware that there is any record of such intrusion upon the king's privacy, but the expressions in the text occur in a letter sent by Akbar's foster-brother Aziz, who refused to come to court when summoned and threw up his government, and 'after writing an insolent and reproachful letter to Akbar in which he asked him if he had received a book from heaven, or if he could work miracles like Mahomet that he presumed to introduce a new religion, warned him that he was on the way to eternal perdition, and concluded with a prayer to God to bring him back into the path of salvation' (Elphinstone).

'The Koran, the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David are called *books* by way of excellence, and their followers "People of the Book"' (Elphinstone).

Akbar according to Abdel Kadir had his son Murad instructed in the Gospel, and used to make him begin his lessons 'In the name of Christ' instead of in the usual way 'In the name of God.'

To drive

A people from their ancient fold of Truth, etc. Malleeson says 'This must have happened because Akbar states it, but of the forced conversions I have found no record. This must have taken place whilst he was still a minor, and whilst the chief authority was wielded by Bairam.'

'I reap no revenue from the field of unbelief'

The Hindus are fond of pilgrimages and Akbar removed a remunerative tax raised by his predecessors on pilgrimages. He also abolished the *fezza* or capitation tax on those who differed from the Mahomedan faith. He discouraged all *excessive* prayers, fasts and pilgrimages.

Suttee. Akbar decreed that every widow who showed the least desire not to be burnt on her

husband's funeral pyre, should be let go free and unharmed.

baby-wife. He forbad marriage before the age of puberty.

Indian widow. Akbar ordained that re-marriage was lawful.

Music. 'About a watch before daybreak,' says Abul Fazl, the musicians played to the king in the palace. 'His Majesty had such a knowledge of the science of music as trained musicians do not possess.'

'*The Divine Faith.*' The Divine Faith slowly passed away under the immediate successors of Akbar. An idea of what the Divine Faith was may be gathered from the inscription at the head of the poem. The document referred to, Abul Fazl says 'brought about excellent results (1) the Court became a gathering place of the sages and learned of all creeds; the good doctrines of all religious systems were recognized, and their defects were not allowed to obscure their good features; (2) perfect toleration or peace with all was established; and (3) the perverse and evil-minded were covered with shame on seeing the disinterested motives of His Majesty, and these stood in the pillory of disgrace.' Dated September 1579—Ragab 987 (Blochmann xiv.).

THE BANDIT'S DEATH.

TO SIR WALTER SCOTT.¹

O GREAT AND GALLANT SCOTT,
TRUE GENTLEMAN, HEART, BLOOD AND BONE,
I WOULD IT HAD BEEN MY LOT
TO HAVE SEEN THEE, AND HEARD THEE, AND
KNOWN.

SIR, do you see this dagger? nay, why
do you start aside?

I was not going to stab you, tho' I *am*
the Bandit's bride.

You have set a price on his head: I may
claim it without a lie.

What have I here in the cloth? I will
show it you by-and-by.

¹ I have adopted Sir Walter Scott's version of the following story as given in his last journal (Death of Il Bizarro)—but I have taken the liberty of making some slight alterations.

Sir, I was once a wife. I had one brief
summer of bliss.

But the Bandit had woo'd me in vain,
and he stabb'd my Piero with this.

And he dragg'd me up there to his cave
in the mountain, and there one
day

He had left his dagger behind him. I
found it. I hid it away.

For he reek'd with the blood of Piero;
his kisses were red with his crime,
And I cried to the Saints to avenge me.
They heard, they bided their time.

In a while I bore him a son, and he
loved to dandle the child,
And that was a link between us; but I
—to be reconciled?—

No, by the Mother of God, tho' I think
I hated him less,
And—well, if I sinn'd last night, I will
find the Priest and confess.

Listen! we three were alone in the dell
at the close of the day.

I was lilting a song to the babe, and it
laugh'd like a dawn in May.

Then on a sudden we saw your soldiers
crossing the ridge,
And he caught my little one from me:
we dipt down under the bridge

By the great dead pine—you know it—
and heard as we crouch'd below,
The clatter of arms, and voices, and men
passing to and fro.

Black was the night when we crept away
—not a star in the sky—
Hush'd as the heart of the grave, till the
little one utter'd a cry.

I whisper'd 'give it to me,' but he would
not answer me—then
He gript it so hard by the throat that
the boy never cried again.

We return'd to his cave—the link was
broken—he sobb'd and he wept,
And cursed himself; then he yawn'd, for
the wretch *could* sleep, and he
slept

Ay, till dawn stole into the cave, and a
ray red as blood

Glanced on the strangled face—I could
make Sleep Death, if I would—

Glared on at the murder'd son, and the
murderous father at rest, . . .

I drove the blade that had slain my hus-
band thrice thro' his breast.

He was loved at least by his dog: it was
chain'd, but its horrible yell

'She has kill'd him, has kill'd him, has
kill'd him' rang out all down
thro' the dell,

Till I felt I could end myself too with the
dagger—so deafen'd and dazed—

Take it, and save me from it! I fled.
I was all but crazed

With the grief that gnaw'd at my heart,
and the weight that dragg'd at
my hand;

But thanks to the Blessed Saints that I
came on none of his band;

And the band will be scatter'd now their
gallant captain is dead,

For I with this dagger of his—do you
doubt me? Here is his head!

THE CHURCH-WARDEN AND THE CURATE.

This is written in the dialect which was cur-
rent in my youth at Spilsby and in the country
about it.

I.

EH? good daäy! good daäy! thaw it
bean't not mooch of a daäy,

Nasty, casselty¹ weather! an' mea haäfe
down wi' my haäy!²

¹ 'Casselty,' casualty, chance weather.

² 'Haäfe down wi' my haäy,' while my grass
is only half-mown.

II.

How be the farm gittin on? noäways.
Gittin on i'deeäd!

Why, tonups was haäfe on 'em fingers
an' toäs,¹ an' the mare brokken-
kneeäd,

An' pigs didn't sell at fall,² an' wa lost
wer Haldeny cow,

An' it beäts ma to know wot she died on,
but wool's looking oop ony how.

III.

An' soä they've maäde tha a parson, an'
thou'll git along, niver fear,

Fur I beän chuch-warden mysen i' the
parish fur fifteen year.

Well—sin ther beä chuch-wardens, ther
mun be parsons an' all,

An' if t'öne stick alongside t'uther³ the
chuch weänt happen a fall.

IV.

Fur I wur a Baptis wonst, an' ageän the
toithe an' the raäte,

Till I fun⁴ that it warn't not the gaänist⁵
waäy to the narra Gaäte.

An' I can't abeär 'em, I can't, fur a lot
on 'em coom'd ta-year⁶—

I wur down wi' the rheumatis then—to
*my*pond to wesh thessens there—

Sa I sticks like the ivin⁷ as long as I
lives to the owd chuch now,

Fur they wesh'd their sins i' *my* pond,
an' I doubts they poison'd the cow.

V.

Ay, an' ya seed the Bishop. They say:
'at he coom'd fra nowt—

Burn i' traäde. Sa I warrants 'e niver
said haäfe wot 'e thowt,

But 'e creeäpt an' 'e crawl'd along, till
'e feeäld 'e could howd 'is oän,

Then 'e married a great Yerl's darter,
an' sits o' the Bishop's throän.

¹ 'Fingers and toes,' a disease in turnips.

² 'Fall,' autumn.

³ 'If t'öne stick alongside t'uther,' if the one
hold by the other. One is pronounced like 'own.'

⁴ 'Fun,' found.

⁵ 'Gaänist,' nearest.

⁶ 'Ta-year,' this year.

⁷ 'Ivin,' ivy.

VI.

Now I'll gie tha a bit o' my mind an'
tha weant be taakin' offence,
Fur thou be a big scholard now wi' a
hoonderd haäcre o' sense—
But sich an obstropulous¹ lad—naay,
naay—fur I minds tha sa well,
Tha'd niver not hopple² thy tongue, an'
the tongue's sit afire o' Hell,
As I says to my missis to-daay, when she
hurl'd a plaäte at the cat
An' anoother ageän my noäse. Ya was
niver sa bad as that.

VII.

But I minds when i' Howlaby beck won
daäy ya was ticklin' o' trout,
An' keeäper 'e seed ya an roon'd, an' 'e
beal'd³ to ya 'Lad coom hout'
An' ya stood oop naäkt i' the beck, an'
ya tell'd 'im to knaw his awn
plaäce
An' ya call'd 'im a clown, ya did, an' ya
thraw'd the fish i' 'is faäce,
An' 'e torn'd⁴ as red as a stag-tuckey's⁵
wattles, but theer an' then
I coämb'd 'im down, fur I promised ya'd
niver not do it ageän.

VIII.

An' I cotch'd tha wonst i' my garden,
when thou was a height-year-
howd,⁶
An' I fun thy pockets as full o' my pip-
pins as iver they'd 'owd,⁷
An' thou was as peärky⁸ as owl, an' tha
maäde me as mad as mad,
But I says to tha 'keep 'em, an' wel-
come' fur thou was the Parson's
lad.

¹ 'Obstropulous,' obstreperous—here the Curate makes a sign of deprecation.

² 'Hopple' or 'hobble,' to tie the legs of a skittish cow when she is being milked.

³ 'Beal'd,' bellowed.

⁴ In such words as 'torned' (turned), 'hurled,' the *r* is hardly audible.

⁵ 'Stag-tuckey,' turkey-cock.

⁶ 'Height-year-howd,' eight-year-old.

⁷ 'Owd,' hold.

⁸ 'Peärky,' pert.

IX.

An Parson 'e 'ears on it all, an' then
taäkes kindly to me,
An' then I wur chose Chuch-warden an'
coom'd to the top o' the tree,
Fur Quoloty's hall my friends, an' they
maäkes ma a help to the poor,
When I gits the plaäte fuller o' Soondays
nor ony chuch-warden afoor,
Fur if iver thy feyther 'ed riled me I kep'
mysen meeäk as a lamb,
An' saw by the Graäce o' the Lord, Mr.
Harry, I ham wot I ham.

X.

But Parson 'e *will* speäk out, saw, now
'e be sixty-seven,
He'll niver swap Owlby an' Scratby fur
owl but the Kingdom o' Heaven;
An' thou'll be 'is Curate 'ere, but, if iver
tha meäns to git 'igher,
Tha mun tackle the sins o' the Wo'ld,¹
an' not the faults o' the Squire.
An' I reckons tha'll light o' a livin' some-
wheers i' the Wowd² or the Fen,
If tha cottons down to thy better, an'
keeäps thysen to thysen.
But niver not speäk plaain out, if tha
wants to git forrards a bit,
But creeäp along the hedge-bottoms, an'
thou'll be a Bishop yit.

XI.

Naäy, but tha *mun* speäk hout to the
Baptises here i' the town,
Fur moäst on 'em talks ageän tithe, an'
I'd like tha to preäch 'em down,
Fur *they've* bin a-preächin' *mea* down,
they heve, an' I haätes 'em now,
Fur they leäved their nasty sins i' my
pond, an' it poison'd the cow.

¹ 'Wo'ld,' the world. Short *o*.

² 'Wowd,' wold.

CHARITY.

I.

WHAT am I doing, you say to me,
‘wasting the sweet summer hours’?
Haven’t you eyes? I am dressing the
grave of a woman with flowers.

II.

For a woman ruin’d the world, as God’s
own scriptures tell,
And a man ruin’d mine, but a woman,
God bless her, kept me from Hell.

III.

Love me? O yes, no doubt—how long
—till you threw me aside!
Dresses and laces and jewels and never
a ring for the bride.

IV.

All very well just now to be calling me
darling and sweet,
And after a while would it matter so
much if I came on the street?

V.

You when I met you first—when *he*
brought you!—I turn’d away
And the hard blue eyes have it still, that
stare of a beast of prey.

VI.

You were his friend—you—you—when
he promised to make me his bride,
And you knew that he meant to betray
me—you knew—you knew that
he lied.

VII.

He married an heiress, an orphan with
half a shire of estate,—
I sent him a desolate wail and a curse,
when I learn’d my fate.

VIII.

For I used to play with the knife, creep
down to the river-shore,

Moan to myself ‘one plunge—then quiet
for evermore.’

IX.

Would the man have a touch of remorse
when he heard what an end was
mine?
Or brag to his fellow rakes of his conquest
over their wine?

X.

Money—my hire—*his* money—I sent
him back what he gave,—
Will you move a little that way? your
shadow falls on the grave.

XI.

Two trains clash’d: then and there he
was crush’d in a moment and
died,
But the new-wedded wife was unharm’d,
tho’ sitting close at his side.

XII.

She found my letter upon him, my wail
of reproach and scorn;
I had cursed the woman he married, and
him, and the day I was born.

XIII.

They put him aside for ever, and after a
week—no more—
A stranger as welcome as Satan—a widow
came to my door:

XIV.

So I turn’d my face to the wall, I was
mad, I was raving-wild,
I was close on that hour of dishonour,
the birth of a baseborn child.

XV.

O you that can flatter your victims, and
juggle, and lie and cajole,
Man, can you even guess at the love of
a soul for a soul?

XVI.

I had cursed her as woman and wife,
and in wife and woman I found
The tenderest Christ-like creature that
ever stept on the ground.

XVII.

She watch'd me, she nursed me, she fed
me, she sat day and night by my
bed,
Till the joyless birthday came of a boy
born happily dead.

XVIII.

And ner name? what was it? I ask'd
her. She said with a sudden glow
On her patient face 'My dear, I will
tell you before I go.'

XIX.

And I when I learnt it at last, I shriek'd,
I sprang from my seat,
I wept, and I kiss'd her hands, I flung
myself down at her feet,

XX.

And we pray'd together for *him*, for *him*
who had given her the name.
She has left me enough to live on. I
need no wages of shame.

XXI.

She died of a fever caught when a nurse
in a hospital ward.
She is high in the Heaven of Heavens,
she is face to face with her Lord,

XXII.

And He sees not her like anywhere in
this pitiless world of ours!
I have told you my tale. Get you gone.
I am dressing her grave with
flowers.

KAPIOLANI.

Kapiolani was a great chieftainess who lived in the Sandwich Islands at the beginning of this century. She won the cause of Christianity by openly defying the priests of the terrible goddess Peelè. In spite of their threats of vengeance she ascended the volcano Mauna-Loa, then clambered down over a bank of cinders 400 feet high to the great lake of fire (nine miles round)—Kilauēā—the home and haunt of the goddess, and flung into the boiling lava the consecrated berries which it was sacrilege for a woman to handle.

I.

WHEN from the terrors of Nature a
people have fashion'd and worship
a Spirit of Evil,
Blest be the Voice of the Teacher who
calls to them
'Set yourselves free!'

II.

Noble the Saxon who hurl'd at his Idol
a valorous weapon in olden
England!
Great and greater, and greatest of women,
island heroine, Kapiolani
Clomb the mountain, and flung the berries,
and dared the Goddess, and freed
the people
Of Hawa-i-ee!

III.

A people believing that Peelè the Goddess
would wallow in fiery riot and
revel
On Kilauēā,
Dance in a fountain of flame with her
devils, or shake with her thunders
and shatter her island,
Rolling her anger
Thro' blasted valley and flaring forest
in blood-red cataracts down to
the sea!

IV.

Long as the lava-light
Glares from the lava-lake
Dazing the starlight,

Long as the silvery vapour in daylight
Over the mountain
Floats, will the glory of Kapiolani be
mingled with either on Hawa-i-ee.

V.

What said her Priesthood?
'Woe to this island if ever a woman
should handle or gather the berries
of Peelè!

Accurséd were she!
And woe to this island if ever a woman
should climb to the dwelling of
Peelè the Goddess!
Accurséd were she!'

VI.

One from the Sunrise
Dawn'd on His people, and slowly before
him
Vanish'd shadow-like
Gods and Goddesses,
None but the terrible Peelè remaining as
Kapiolani ascended her mountain,
Baffled her priesthood,
Broke the Taboo,
Dipt to the crater,
Call'd on the Power adored by the
Christian, and crying 'I dare her,
let Peelè avenge herself'!
Into the flame-billow dash'd the berries,
and drove the demon from Hawa-
i-ee.

THE DAWN.

"You are but children."
Egyptian Priest to Solon.

I.

RED of the Dawn!
Screams of a babe in the red-hot palms
of a Moloch of Tyre,
Man with his brotherless dinner on
man in the tropical wood,
Priests in the name of the Lord passing
souls thro' fire to the fire,
Head-hunters and boats of Dahomey
that float upon human blood!

II.

Red of the Dawn!
Godless fury of peoples, and Christless
frolic of kings,
And the bolt of war dashing down
upon cities and blazing farms,
For Babylon was a child new-born,
and Rome was a babe in arms,
And London and Paris and all the rest
are as yet but in leading-strings.

III.

Dawn not Day,
While scandal is mouthing a bloodless
name at *her* cannibal feast,
And rake-ruin'd bodies and souls go
down in a common wreck,
And the press of a thousand cities is
prized for it smells of the beast,
Or easily violates virgin Truth for a
coin or a cheque.

IV.

Dawn not Day!
Is it Shame, so few should have climb'd
from the dens in the level below,
Men, with a heart and a soul, no
slaves of a four-footed will?
But if twenty million of summers are
stored in the sunlight still,
We are far from the noon of man, there
is time for the race to grow.

V.

Red of the Dawn!
Is it turning a fainter red? so be it, but
when shall we lay
The Ghost of the Brute that is walking
and haunting us yet, and be free?
In a hundred, a thousand winters?
Ah, what will *our* children be,
The men of a hundred thousand, a
million summers away?

THE MAKING OF MAN.

WHERE is one that, born of woman,
altogether can escape
From the lower world within him, moods
of tiger, or of ape?

Man as yet is being made, and ere the
crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch
him into shape?

All about him shadow still, but, while
the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly
gaining on the shade,

Till the peoples all are one, and all
their voices blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker 'It is finish'd.
Man is made.'

THE DREAMER.

ON a midnight in midwinter when all
but the winds were dead,
'The meek shall inherit the earth' was
a Scripture that rang thro' his
head,
Till he dream'd that a Voice of the Earth
went wailingly past him and said :

'I am losing the light of my Youth
And the Vision that led me of old,
And I clash with an iron Truth,
When I make for an Age of gold,
And I would that my race were run,
For teeming with liars, and madmen,
and knaves,

And wearied of Autocrats, Anarchs,
and Slaves,
And darken'd with doubts of a Faith
that saves,

And crimson with battles, and hollow
with graves,

To the wail of my winds, and the
moan of my waves

I whirl, and I follow the Sun.'

Was it only the wind of the Night shrill-
ing out Desolation and wrong
Thro' a dream of the dark? Yet he
thought that he answer'd her wail
with a song—

Moaning your losses, O Earth,
Heart-weary and overdone !
But all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun !

He is racing from heaven to heaven
And less will be lost than won,
For all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun !

The Reign of the Meek upon earth,
O weary one, has it begun?
But all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun !

For moans will have grown sphere-
music

Or ever your race be run !
And all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun !

MECHANOPHILUS.

(In the time of the first railways.)

Now first we stand and understand,
And sunder false from true,
And handle boldly with the hand,
And see and shape and do.

Dash back that ocean with a pier,
Strow yonder mountain flat,
A railway there, a tunnel here,
Mix me this Zone with that !

Bring me my horse—my horse? my wings
That I may soar the sky,
For Thought into the outward springs,
I find her with the eye.

O will she, moonlike, sway the main,
And bring or chase the storm,
Who was a shadow in the brain,
And is a living form?

Far as the Future vaults her skies,
From this my vantage ground
To those still-working energies
I spy nor term nor bound.

As we surpass our fathers' skill,
Our sons will shame our own ;
A thousand things are hidden still
And not a hundred known.

And had some prophet spoken true
Of all we shall achieve,
The wonders were so wildly new,
That no man would believe.

Meanwhile, my brothers, work, and wield
The forces of to-day,
And plow the Present like a field,
And garner all you may!

You, what the cultured surface grows,
Dispense with careful hands:
Deep under deep for ever goes,
Heaven over heaven expands.

RIFLEMEN FORM!

THERE is a sound of thunder afar,
Storm in the South that darkens the day!
Storm of battle and thunder of war!
Well if it do not roll our way.
Storm, Storm, Riflemen form!
Ready, be ready against the storm!
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form!

Be not deaf to the sound that warns,
Be not gull'd by a despot's plea!
Are figs of thistles? or grapes of thorns?
How can a despot feel with the Free?
Form, Form, Riflemen Form!
Ready, be ready to meet the storm!
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form!

Let your reforms for a moment go!
Look to your butts, and take good aims!
Better a rotten borough or so
Than a rotten fleet and a city in flames!
Storm, Storm, Riflemen form!
Ready, be ready against the storm!
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form!

Form, be ready to do or die!
Form in Freedom's name and the Queen's!
True we have got—*such* a faithful ally
That only the Devil can tell what he
means.

Form, Form, Riflemen Form!
Ready, be ready to meet the storm!
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form!¹

¹ I have been asked to republish this old poem, which was first published in 'The Times,' May 9, 1859, before the Volunteer movement began.

THE TOURNEY.

RALPH would fight in Edith's sight,
For Ralph was Edith's lover,
Ralph went down like a fire to the fight,
Struck to the left and struck to the right,
Roll'd them over and over.
'Gallant Sir Ralph,' said the king.

Casques were crack'd and hauberks hack'd,
Lances snapt in sunder,
Rang the stroke, and sprang the blood,
Knights were thwack'd and riven, and
hew'd
Like broad oaks with thunder.
'O what an arm,' said the king.

Edith bow'd her stately head,
Saw them lie confounded,
Edith Montfort bow'd her head,
Crown'd her knight's, and flush'd as red
As poppies when she crown'd it.
'Take her Sir Ralph,' said the king.

THE WANDERER.

THE gleam of household sunshine ends,
And here no longer can I rest;
Farewell!—You will not speak, my
friends,
Unfriendly of your parted guest.

O well for him that finds a friend,
Or makes a friend where'er he come,
And loves the world from end to end,
And wanders on from home to home!

O happy he, and fit to live,
On whom a happy home has power
To make him trust his life, and give
His fealty to the halcyon hour!

I count you kind, I hold you true;
But what may follow who can tell?
Give me a hand—and you—and you—
And deem me grateful, and farewell!

POETS AND CRITICS.

THIS thing, that thing is the rage,
 Helter-skelter runs the age;
 Minds on this round earth of ours
 Vary like the leaves and flowers,
 Fashion'd after certain laws;
 Sing thou low or loud or sweet,
 All at all points thou canst not meet,
 Some will pass and some will pause.

What is true at last will tell:
 Few at first will place thee well;
 Some too low would have thee shine,
 Some too high—no fault of thine—
 Hold thine own, and work thy will!
 Year will graze the heel of year,
 But seldom comes the poet here,
 And the Critic's rarer still.

A VOICE SPAKE OUT OF
THE SKIES.

A VOICE spake out of the skies
 To a just man and a wise—
 'The world and all within it
 Will only last a minute!'
 And a beggar began to cry
 'Food, food or I die!'
 Is it worth his while to eat,
 Or mine to give him meat,
 If the world and all within it
 Were nothing the next minute?

DOUBT AND PRAYER.

THO' Sin too oft, when smitten by Thy
 rod,
 Rail at 'Blind Fate' with many a vain
 'Alas!'
 From sin thro' sorrow into Thee we pass
 By that same path our true forefathers
 trod;
 And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
 Draw from my death Thy living flower
 and grass,
 Before I learn that Love, which is, and
 was

My Father, and my Brother, and my
 God!
 Steel me with patience! soften me with
 grief!
 Let blow the trumpet strongly while I
 pray,
 Till this embattled wall of unbelief
 My prison, not my fortress, fall away!
 Then, if Thou willest, let my day be
 brief,
 So Thou wilt strike Thy glory thro' the
 day.

FAITH.

I.

DOUBT no longer that the Highest is the
 wisest and the best,
 Let not all that saddens Nature blight
 thy hope or break thy rest,
 Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the
 shipwreck, or the rolling
 Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or
 the famine, or the pest!

II.

Neither mourn if human creeds be lower
 than the heart's desire!
 Thro' the gates that bar the distance
 comes a gleam of what is higher.
 Wait till Death has flung them open,
 when the man will make the Maker
 Dark no more with human hatreds in the
 glare of deathless fire!

THE SILENT VOICES.

WHEN the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
 Brings the Dreams about my bed,
 Call me not so often back,
 Silent Voices of the dead,
 Toward the lowland ways behind me,
 And the sunlight that is gone!
 Call me rather, silent voices,
 Forward to the starry track
 Glimmering up the heights beyond me
 On, and always on!

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.

I.

WILL my tiny spark of being wholly
vanish in your deeps and heights?
Must my day be dark by reason, O ye
Heavens, of your boundless nights,
Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and
your fiery clash of meteorites?

II.

'Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the
limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that
Power which alone is great,
Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor
the silent Opener of the Gate.'

THE DEATH OF THE DUKE
OF CLARENCE AND AVON-
DALE.*To the Mourners.*

THE bridal garland falls upon the bier,
The shadow of a crown, that o'er him
hung,

Has vanish'd in the shadow cast by
Death.

So princely, tender, truthful, reverent,
pure—

Mourn! That a world-wide Empire
mourns with you,

That all the Thrones are clouded by
your loss,

Were slender solace. Yet be comforted;
For if this earth be ruled by Perfect

Love,

Then, after his brief range of blameless
days,

The toll of funeral in an Angel ear
Sounds happier than the merriest mar-
riage-bell.

The face of Death is toward the Sun
of Life,

His shadow darkens earth: his truer
name

Is 'Onward,' no discordance in the
roll

And march of that Eternal Harmony
Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly
heard

Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in
hope!

SONGS FROM THE PLAYS.

FROM 'QUEEN MARY.'

SHAME upon you, Robin,
Shame upon you now !
Kiss me would you ? with my hands
Milking the cow ?
Daisies grow again,
Kingcups blow again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the
cow.

Robin came behind me,
Kiss'd me well I vow ;
Cuff him could I ? with my hands
Milking the cow ?
Swallows fly again,
Cuckoos cry again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the
cow.

Come, Robin, Robin,
Come and kiss me now ;
Help it can I ? with my hands
Milking the cow ?
Ringdoves coo again,
All things woo again.
Come behind and kiss me milking the
cow !

HAPLESS doom of woman happy in be-
trothing !
Beauty passes like a breath and love is
lost in loathing :
Low, my lute ; speak low, my lute, but
say the world is nothing—
Low, lute, low !
Love will hover round the flowers when
they first awaken ;

Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be
overtaken ;
Low, my lute ! oh low, my lute ! we
fade and are forsaken—
Low, dear lute, low !

FROM 'HAROLD.'

Two young lovers in winter weather,
None to guide them,
Walk'd at night on the misty heather ;
Night, as black as a raven's feather ;
Both were lost and found together,
None beside them.

Lost, lost, the light of day,
'I am beside thee.'
Lost, lost, we have lost the way.
'Love, I will guide thee.'
Whither, O whither ? into the river,
Where we two may be lost together,
And lost for ever ? 'Oh ! never, oh !
never,
Tho' we be lost and be found together.'

FROM 'BECKET.'

OVER ! the sweet summer closes,
The reign of the roses is done ;
Over and gone with the roses,
And over and gone with the sun.

Over ! the sweet summer closes,
And never a flower at the close ;
Over and gone with the roses,
And winter again and the snows.

DUET.

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear
in the pine overhead?
2. No; but the voice of the deep as it
hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the
voice of the deep from the strand,
One coming up with a song in the
flush of the glimmering red?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming
up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a
life till the life shall have fled?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that
can lift up a life from the dead.
1. Keep him away from the lone little
isle. Let us be, let us be.
2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him
reign in it—he, it is he,
Love that is born of the deep coming
up with the sun from the sea.

BABBLE in bower
Under the rose!
Bee mustn't buzz,
Whoop—but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,
Nobody near!
Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,
Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop—he can see.

RAINBOW, stay,
Gleam upon gloom,
Bright as my dream,
Rainbow, stay!
But it passes away,
Gloom upon gleam,
Dark as my doom—
O rainbow stay.

FROM 'THE CUP.'

MOON on the field and the foam,
Moon on the waste and the wold,
Moon bring him home, bring him home
Safe from the dark and the cold,
Home, sweet moon, bring him home,
Home with the flock to the fold—
Safe from the wolf to the fold.

ARTEMIS, Artemis, hear us, O Mother,
hear us, and bless us!
Artemis, thou that art life to the wind, to
the wave, to the glebe, to the fire!
Hear thy people who praise thee! O help
us from all that oppress us!
Hear thy priestesses hymn thy glory! O
yield them all their desire!

FROM 'THE FALCON.'

'DEAD mountain flowers, dead mountain-
meadow flowers,
Dearer than when you made your moun-
tain gay,
Sweeter than any violet of to-day,
Richer than all the wide world-wealth of
May,
To me, tho' all your bloom has died
away,
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow
flowers.
O mountain flowers!
Dead flowers!'

FROM 'THE PROMISE OF MAY.'

THE town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm
gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the
cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
 And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,
 And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;
 And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
 And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;
 O grief for the promise of May, of May,
 O grief for the promise of May.

WHAT did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
 Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa gaäy,
 An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
 What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
 When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
 And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,
 At the end of the daäy,
 For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
 Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,
 An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
 Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
 What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
 When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,
 At the end of the daäy,
 For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
 Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
 An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue?
 Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you;
 For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,

To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
 Till the end of the daäy
 And the last loäd hoäm.

GEE oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
 Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
 Thruf slush an' squad
 When roäds was bad,
 But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
 Fur boäth on 'em knawed as well as mysen
 That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.
 Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
 Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

O MAN, forgive thy mortal foe,
 Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
 For all the souls on earth that live
 To be forgiven must forgive.
 Forgive him seventy times and seven
 For all the blessed souls in Heaven
 Are both forgivers and forgiven.

O HAPPY lark, that warblest high
 Above thy lowly nest,
 O brook, that brawlest merrily by
 Thro' fields that once were blest,
 O tower spiring to the sky,
 O graves in daisies drest,
 O Love and Life, how weary am I,
 And how I long for rest.

FROM 'THE FORESTERS.'

THE warrior Earl of Allendale,
 He loved the Lady Anne;
 The lady loved the master well,
 The maid she loved the man.

All in the castle garden,
 Or ever the day began,
 The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
 The maid a rose to the man.

'I go to fight in Scotland
With many a savage clan ;'
The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

'Farewell, farewell, my warrior Earl !'
And ever a tear down ran.
She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
And the maid a kiss to the man.

LOVE flew in at the window
As Wealth walk'd in at the door.
'You have come for you saw Wealth
coming,' said I.
But he flutter'd his wings with a sweet
little cry,
I'll cleave to you rich or poor.

Wealth dropt out of the window,
Poverty crept thro' the door.
'Well now you would fain follow Wealth,'
said I,
But he flutter'd his wings as he gave me
the lie,
I cling to you all the more.

DRINKING SONG.

LONG live Richard,
Robin and Richard !
Long live Richard !
Down with John !
Drink to the Lion-heart
Every one !
Pledge the Plantagenet,
Him that is gone.
Who knows whither ?
God's good Angel
Help him back hither,
And down with John !
Long live Robin,
Robin and Richard !
Long live Robin,
And down with John !

To sleep ! to sleep ! The long bright
day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.
To sleep ! to sleep !
Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the
day ;
Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade
away.
To sleep ! to sleep !
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past
be past !
Sleep, happy soul ! all life will sleep at
last.
To sleep ! to sleep !

THERE is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be ;
There are no hearts like English hearts
Such hearts of oak as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be ;
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

Full Chorus.

And these will strike for England
And man and maid be free
To foil and spoil the tyrant
Beneath the greenwood tree.

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be ;
There are no wives like English wives
So fair and chaste as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be ;
There are no maids like English maids
So beautiful as they be.

Full Chorus.

And these shall wed with freemen,
And all their sons be free,
To sing the songs of England
Beneath the greenwood tree.

UP with you, out of the forest and over
the hills and away,
And over this Robin Hood's bay !
Up thro' the light of the seas by the
moon's long-silvering ray !

To a land where the fay,
Not an eye to survey,
In the night, in the day,
Can have frolic and play.

Up with you, all of you, out of it ! hear
and obey.

Man, lying here alone,
Moody creature,
Of a nature
Stronger, sadder than my own,
Were I human, were I human,
I could love you like a woman.
Man, man,
You shall wed your Marian.
She is true, and you are true,
And you love her and she loves you ;
Both be happy, and adieu for ever and
for evermore—adieu.

By all the deer that spring
Thro' wood and lawn and ling,
When all the leaves are green ;
By arrow and gray goosewing,
When horn and echo ring,
We care so much for a King ;
We care not much for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the
woods.

By all the leaves of spring,
And all the birds that sing
When all the leaves are green ;
By arrow and by bowstring,
We care so much for a King
That we would die for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the
woods.

THE bee buzz'd up in the heat.
'I am faint for your honey, my sweet.'
The flower said 'Take it, my dear,
For now is the spring of the year.
So come, come !'
'Hum !'

And the bee buzz'd down from the heat.

And the bee buzz'd up in the cold
When the flower was wither'd and old.
'Have you still any honey, my dear ?'
She said 'It's the fall of the year,
But come, come !'
'Hum !'

And the bee buzz'd off in the cold.

Now the King is home again, and never-
more to roam again,
Now the King is home again, the King
will have his own again,
Home again, home again, and each will
have his own again,
All the birds in merry Sherwood sing
and sing him home again.

CROSSING THE BAR.

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark ;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time
and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

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